

THE EARTHLY PARADISE  
IN TWELVE PARTS



THE EARTHLY  
PARADISE: A POEM  
BY WILLIAM MORRIS

PART VII

THE DEATH OF PARIS  
THE LAND EAST OF THE SUN AND  
WEST OF THE MOON

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## OCTOBER

O LOVE, turn from the unchanging sea, and gaze  
Down these grey slopes upon the year grown old,  
A-dying mid the autumn-scented haze,  
That hangeth o'er the hollow in the wold,  
Where the wind-bitten ancient elms infold  
Grey church, long barn, orchard, and red-roofed stead,  
Wrought in dead days for men a long while dead.

Come down, O love ; may not our hands still meet,  
Since still we live to-day, forgetting June,  
Forgetting May, deeming October sweet—  
—O hearken, hearken ! through the afternoon,  
The grey tower sings a strange old tinkling tune !  
Sweet, sweet, and sad, the toiling year's last breath,  
Too satiate of life to strive with death.

And we too—will it not be soft and kind,  
That rest from life, from patience and from pain,  
That rest from bliss we know not when we find,  
That rest from Love which ne'er the end can gain?—  
—Hark, how the tune swells, that erewhile did wane !  
Look up, love !—ah, cling close and never move !  
How can I have enough of life and love ?

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

OCTOBER drew our elders to a house,  
That mid the tangled vines, and clamorous  
Glad vintagers, stood calm, slim-pillared, white,  
As though it fain would hide away from sight  
The joy that through the sad lost autumn rung.  
As hot the day was, as when summer hung,  
With worn feet, on the last step of July,  
Ashamed to cast its flowery raiment by :  
Round the old men the white porch-pillars stood,  
Gold-stained, as with the sun, streaked as with blood,  
Blood of the earth, at least, and to and fro  
Before them did the high-girt maidens go,  
Eager, bright-eyed, and careless of to-morn ;  
And young men with them, nowise made forlorn  
By love and autumn-tide ; and in nowise  
Content to pray for love with hopeless eyes,  
Close lips, and timid hands ; rather, indeed,  
Lest youth and life should fail them at their need,  
At what light joyous semblance of him ran  
Amidst the vines, 'twixt eyes of maid and man,  
Wilfully blind they caught.

But now at last,  
As in the apple-gathering tide late past,  
So would the elders do now ; in a while,  
He who should tell the tale, with a grave smile,  
And eyes fixed on the fairest damsel there,

## OCTOBER

Began to say : "Ye blithe folk well might bear  
To hearken to a sad tale, yet to-day  
No heart I have to cast all hope away  
From out my history : so be warned hereby,  
Nor wait unto the end, deliciously  
To nurse your pity ; for the end is good  
And peaceful, howso buffeting and rude  
Winds, waves, and men were, ere the end was done."

The sweet eyes that his eyes were set upon  
Were hid by shamefast lids as he did speak,  
And redder colour burned on her fresh cheek,  
And her lips smiled, as, with a half-sad sigh,  
He 'gan to tell this lovesome history.

# THE STORY OF ACONTIUS AND CYDIPPE

## ARGUMENT

A CERTAIN man coming to Delos beheld a noble damsel there, and was smitten with the love of her, and made all things of no account but the winning of her, which at last he brought about in strange wise.

A CERTAIN island-man of old,  
Well fashioned, young, and wise and bold,  
Voyaged awhile in Greekish seas,  
Till Delos of the Cyclades  
His keel made, and ashore he went ;  
And, wandering with no fixed intent,  
With others of the shipmen there,  
They came into a garden fair,  
Too sweet for sea-tossed men, I deem,  
If they would scape the lovesome dream  
That youth and May cast o'er the earth,  
If they would keep their careless mirth  
For hands of eld to deal withal.

So in that close did it befall  
That 'neath the trees well wrought of May  
These sat amidmost of the day



## ACONTIUS AND CYDIPPE

Not dry-lipped, and belike a-strain,  
All gifts of that sweet time to gain,  
And yet not finding all enow  
That at their feet the May did throw,  
But longing, half-expecting still  
Some new delight their cup to fill—  
Yea, overfill, to make all strange  
Their lazy joy with piercing change.  
Therewith their youngest, even he  
I told of first, all suddenly  
'Gan sing a song that fitted well  
The thoughts that each man's heart did tell  
Unto itself, and as his throat  
Moved with the music, did he note  
Through half-shut eyes a company  
Of white-armed maidens drawing nigh,  
Well marshalled, as if there they went  
Upon some serious work intent.

### SONG

*FAIR is the night and fair the day,  
Now April is forgot of May,  
Now into June May falls away ;  
Fair day, fair night, O give me back  
The tide that all fair things did lack  
Except my love, except my sweet !*

*Blow back, O wind ! thou art not kind,  
Though thou art sweet ; thou hast no mind*

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

*Her hair about my sweet to wind ;  
O flowery sward, though thou art bright,  
I praise thee not for thy delight,  
Thou hast not kissed her silver feet.*

*Thou know'st her not, O rustling tree,  
What dost thou then to shadow me,  
Whose shade her breast did never see ?  
O flowers, in vain ye bow adown !  
Ye have not felt her odorous gown  
Brush past your heads my lips to meet.*

*Flow on, great river—thou mayst deem .  
That far away, a summer stream,  
Thou sawest her limbs amidst thee gleam,  
And kissed her foot, and kissed her knee,  
Yet get thee swift unto the sea !  
With nought of truth thou wilt me greet.*

*And thou that men call by my name,  
O helpless one, hast thou no shame  
That thou must even look the same,  
As while ago, as while ago,  
When thou and she were left alone,  
And hands, and lips, and tears did meet ?*

*Grow weak and pine, lie down to die,  
O body in thy misery,  
Because short time and sweet goes by ;  
O foolish heart, how weak thou art !  
Break, break, because thou needs must part  
From thine own love, from thine own sweet !*

## ACONTIUS AND CYDIPPE

What was it that through half-shut eyes  
Pierced to his heart, and made him rise  
As one the July storm awakes  
When through the dawn the thunder breaks?  
What was it that the languor clove,  
Wherewith unhurt he sang of love?  
How was it that his eyes had caught  
Her eyes alone of all; that nought  
The others were but images,  
While she, while she amidst of these  
Not first or last—when she was gone,  
Why must he feel so left alone?  
An image in his heart there was  
Of how amidst them one did pass  
Kind-eyed and soft, and looked at him;  
And now the world was waxen dim  
About him, and of little worth  
Seemed all the wondrous things of earth,  
And fain would he be all alone,  
To wonder why his mirth was gone;  
To wonder why it seemed so strange  
That in nought else was any change,  
When his old life seemed passed away,  
And joy in narrow compass lay,  
He scarce knew where. With laugh and song  
His fellows mocked the dim world's wrong,  
Nor noted him as changed o'ermuch;  
Or if their jests his mood did touch,  
To his great wonder lightly they  
By stammering word were turned away.

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Well, from the close they went at last,  
And through the noble town they passed,  
And saw the wonders wrought of old  
Therein, and heard famed stories told  
Of many a thing ; and as a dream  
Did all things to Acontius seem.  
But when night's wings came o'er that place,  
And men slept, piteous seemed his case  
And wonderful, that therewithal  
Night helped him not. From wall to wall  
Night-long his weary eyes he turned,  
Till in the east the daylight burned.  
And then the pang he would not name,  
Stung by the world's change, fiercer came  
Across him, and in haste he rose,  
Driven unto that flowery close  
By restless longing, knowing not  
What part therein his heart had got,  
Nor why he thitherward must wend.

And now had night's last hope an end,  
When to the garden-gate he came.  
In grey light did the tulip flame  
Over the sward made grey with dew,  
And as unto the place he drew  
Where yesterday he sang that song,  
The ousel-cock sang sweet and strong,  
Though almost ere the sky grew grey  
Had he begun to greet the day.  
There now, as by some strong spell bound,  
Acontius paced that spot of ground,

## ACONTIUS AND CYDIPPE

Restless, with wild thoughts in his head ;  
While round about the white-thorn shed  
Sweet fragrance, and the lovely place,  
Lonely of mankind, lacked no grace  
That love for his own home would have.  
Well sang the birds, the light wind drave  
Through the fresh leaves, untouched as yet  
By summer and its vain regret ;  
Well piped the wind, and as it swept  
The garden through, no sweet thing slept,  
Nor might the scent of blossoms hide  
The fresh smell of the country-side  
Borne on its breath ; and the green bay,  
Whose breast it kissed so far away,  
Spake sometimes yet amid the noise  
Of rustling leaves and song-birds' voice.

So there awhile our man did pace,  
Still wondering at his piteous case  
That, certes, not to any one  
Had happed before—awhile ago  
So pleased to watch the world pass by  
With all its changing imagery ;  
So hot to play his part therein,  
From each day's death good life to win ;  
And now, with a great sigh, he saw  
The yellow level sunbeams draw  
Across the wet grass, as the sun  
First smote the trees, and day begun  
Smiled on the world, whose summer bliss  
In nowise seemed to better his.

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Then, as he thought thereof, he said :  
" Surely all wisdom is clean dead  
Within me. Nought I lack that I,  
By striving, may not come anigh  
Among the things that men desire ;  
And why then like a burnt-out fire,  
Is my life grown ? "

E'en as he spoke  
A throstle-cock beside him broke  
Into the sweetest of his song,  
Yet with his sweet note seemed to wrong  
The unknown trouble of that morn,  
And made him feel yet more forlorn.  
Then he cried out, " O fool, go forth !  
The world is grown of no less worth  
Than yester-morn it was ; go then  
And play thy part among brave men  
As thou hadst will to do before  
Thy feet first touched this charmed shore  
Where all is changed. "

But now the bird  
Flew from beside him, and he heard  
A rustling nigh, although the breeze  
Had died out mid the thick-leaved trees.  
Therewith he raised his eyes and turned,  
And a great fire within him burned,  
And his heart stopped awhile, for there,  
Against a flowering thorn-bush fair,  
Hidden by tulips to the knee,  
His heart's desire his eyes did see.  
Clad was she e'en as is the dove,

## ACONTIUS AND CYDIPPE

Who makes the summer sad with love ;  
High-girded as one hastening  
In swift search for some longed-for thing ;  
Her hair drawn by a silken band  
From her white neck, and in her hand  
A myrtle-spray. Panting she was  
As from the daisies of the grass  
She raised her eyes, and looked around  
Till the astonished eyes she found  
That saw not aught but even her.

There in a silence hard to bear,  
Impossible to break, they stood,  
With faces changed by love, and blood  
So stirred, that many a year of life  
Had been made eager with that strife  
Of minutes ; and so nigh she was  
He saw the little blue veins pass  
Over her heaving breast ; and she  
The trembling of his lips might see,  
The rising tears within his eyes.

Then standing there in mazed wise  
He saw the black-heart tulips bow  
Before her knees, as wavering now  
A half-step unto him she made.  
With a glad cry, though half afraid,  
He stretched his arms out, and the twain,  
E'en at the birth of love's great pain,  
Each unto each so nigh were grown,  
That little lacked to make them one—

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

That little lacked but they should be  
Wedded that hour; knee touching knee,  
Cheek laid to cheek. So seldom fare  
Love's tales, that men are wise to dare;  
Rather, dull hours must pass away,  
And heavy day succeed to day,  
And much be changed by misery,  
Ere two that love may draw anigh—  
And so with these. What fear or shame  
'Twixt longing heart and body came  
'Twere hard to tell—they lingered yet.  
Well-nigh they deemed that they had met,  
And that the worst was o'er; e'en then  
There drew anigh the sound of men—  
Loud laugh, harsh talk. With ill surprise  
He saw fear change her lovesome eyes;  
He knew her heart was thinking now  
Of other folk, and ills that grow  
From overmuch of love; but he  
Cried out amidst his agony,  
Yet stood there helpless, and withal  
A mist across his eyes did fall,  
And all seemed lost indeed, as now  
Slim tulip-stem and hawthorn-bough  
Slipped rustling back into their place,  
And all the glory of her face  
Had left the world, at least awhile,  
And once more all was base and vile.

And yet, indeed, when that sharp pain  
Was something dulled, and once again



## ACONTIUS AND CYDIPPE

Thought helped him, then to him it seemed  
That she had dreamed as he had dreamed,  
And, hoping not for any sight  
Of love, had come made soft by night,  
Made kind by longings unconfessed,  
To give him good hope of the best.  
Then pity came to help his love,  
For now, indeed, he knew whereof  
He sickened ; pity came, and then  
The fear of the rough sons of men,  
Sore hate of things that needs must part  
The loving heart from loving heart ;  
And at each turn it seemed as though  
Fate some huge net round both did throw  
To stay their feet and dim their sight  
Till they were clutched by endless night ;  
And then he fain had torn his hair,  
And cried aloud in his despair,  
But stayed himself as still he thought  
How even that should help him nought,  
That helpless patience needs must be  
His loathéd fellow.   Wearily  
He got him then from out the place  
Made lovely by her scarce-seen face,  
And knew that day what longing meant.

But when the restless daylight went  
From earth's face, through the weary night  
He lay again in just such plight  
As on the last night he had lain ;  
But deemed that he would go again

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

At daylight to that place of flowers.  
So passed the night through all its hours,  
But ere the dawn came, weak and worn  
He fell asleep, nor woke that morn  
Till all the city was astir ;  
And waking must he think of her  
Stolen to that place to find him not—  
Her parted lips, her face flushed hot,  
Her panting breast and girt-up gown,  
Her sleeve ill-fastened, fallen adown  
From one white shoulder, her grey eyes  
Fixed in their misery of surprise,  
As nought they saw but birds and trees ;  
Her woeful lingering, as the breeze  
Died 'neath the growing sun, and folk  
Fresh silence of the morning broke ;  
And then, the death of hope confessed,  
The quivering lip and heaving breast,  
The burst of tears, the homeward way  
Made hateful by joy past away,  
The dreary day made dull and long  
By hope deferred and gathering wrong.  
All this for him !—and thinking thus  
Their twin life seemed so piteous  
That all his manhood from him fled,  
And cast adown upon the bed  
He sobbed and wept full sore, until  
When he of grief had had his fill  
He 'gan to think that he might see  
His love, and cure her misery  
If she should be in that same place

## ACONTIUS AND CYDIPPE

At that same hour when first her face  
Shone on him.

So time wore away  
Till on the world the high noon lay,  
And then at the due place he stood,  
Wondering amid his love-sick mood  
Which blades of grass her foot had bent ;  
And there, as to and fro he went,  
A certain man who seemed to be  
A fisher on the troubled sea,  
An old man and a poor, came nigh  
And greeted him and said :

“ Hereby  
Thou doest well to stand, my son,  
Since thy stay here will soon be done,  
If of that ship of Crete thou be,  
As well I deem. Here shalt thou see  
Each day at noon a company  
Of all our fairest maids draw nigh ;  
To such an one each day they go  
As best can tell them how to do  
In serving of the dreadful queen,  
Whose servant long years hath she been,  
And dwelleth by her chapel fair  
Within this close ; they shall be here,  
E'en while I speak. Wot well, fair son,  
Good need it is this should be done,  
For whatso hasty word is said  
That day unto the moon-crowned maid,  
For such an oath is held, as though  
The whole heart into it did go—

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Behold, they come ! A goodly sight  
Shalt thou have seen, e'en if to-night  
Thou diest ! ”

Grew Acontius wan  
As the sea-cliffs, for the old man  
Now pointed to the gate, wherethrough  
The company of maidens drew  
Toward where they stood ; Acontius,  
With trembling lips, and piteous  
Drawn brow, turned toward them, and afar  
Beheld her like the morning-star  
Amid the weary stars of night.  
Midmost the band went his delight,  
Clad in a gown of blue, whereon  
Were wrought fresh flowers, as newly won  
From the May fields ; with one hand she  
Touched a fair fellow lovingly,  
The other, hung adown, did hold  
An ivory harp well strung with gold ;  
Gaily she went, nor seemed as though  
One troublous thought her heart did know.  
Acontius sickened as she came  
Anigh him, and with heart aflame  
For very rage of jealousy,  
He heard her talking merrily  
Unto her fellow—the first word  
From those sweet lips he yet had heard,  
Nor might he know what thing she said ;  
Yet presently she turned her head  
And saw him, and her talk she stopped  
E'en therewith, and her lids down dropped,

## ACONTIUS AND CYDIPPE

And trembling amid love and shame  
Over her face a bright flush came ;  
Nathless without another look  
She passed him by, whose whole frame shook  
With passion as an aspen leaf.

But she being gone, all blind with grief,  
He stood there long, and muttered :  
“ Why

Would she not note my misery ?  
Had it been then so hard to turn  
And show me that her heart did yearn  
For something nigher like mine own ?  
O well content to leave me lone,  
O well content to stand apart,  
And nurse a pleasure in thine heart,  
The joy of being so well beloved,  
Still taking care thou art not moved  
By aught like trouble !—yet beware,  
For thou mayst fall for all thy care ! ”

So from the place he turned away ;  
Some secret spell he deemed there lay,  
Some bar unseen, athwart that grass,  
O'er which his feet might never pass  
Whatso his heart bade. Hour by hour  
Passed of the day, and ever slower  
They seemed to drag, and ever he  
Thought of her last look wearily—  
Now meant it that, now meant it this ;  
Now bliss, and now the death of bliss.

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

“But O, if once again,” he thought,  
“Face unto face we might be brought,  
Then doubt I not but I should read  
What at her hands would be my meed,  
And in such wise my life would guide,  
Either the weary end to bide  
E’en as I might, or strengthen me  
To take the sweet felicity,  
Casting by thought of fear or death—  
But now when I must hold my breath,  
Who knows how long, while scale mocks scale  
With trembling joy, and trembling bale—  
O hard to bear! O hard to bear!”

So spake he, knowing bitter fear  
And hopeful longing’s sharp distress,  
But not the weight of hopelessness.

And now there passed by three days more,  
And to the flowery place that bore  
The sharp and sweet of his desire  
Each day he went, his heart afire  
With foolish hope. Each day he saw  
The band of damsels toward him draw,  
And trembling said, “Now, now at last  
Surely her white arms will be cast  
About my neck before them all;  
Or at the worst her eyes will call  
My feet to follow. Can it be  
That she can bear my misery,  
When of my heart she surely knows?”

## ACONTIUS AND CYDIPPE

And every day midmost the close  
They met, and on the first day she  
Did look upon him furtively  
In loving wise ; and through his heart  
Love sent a pleasure-pointed dart—  
A minute, and away she went,  
And left him nowise more content  
Than erst he had been.

The next day  
Needs must she flush and turn away  
Before their eyes met, and he stood  
When she was gone in wretched mood,  
Faint with desire.

The third day came,  
And then his hungry eyes, aflame  
With longing wild, beheld her pass  
As though amidst a dream she was ;  
Then e'en ere she had left the place  
With his clenched hand he smote his face,  
And void of everything but pain,  
Through the thronged streets the sea did gain,  
Not recking aught, and there at last  
His body on the sand he cast,  
Nigh the green waves, till in the end  
Some thought the crushing cloud did rend,  
And down the tears rushed from his eyes  
For ruth of his own miseries ;  
And with the tears came thought again  
To mingle with his formless pain  
And hope withal—but yet more fear,  
For he bethought him now that near

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

The time drew for his ship to sail.  
Yet was the thought of some avail  
To heal the unreason of his heart,  
For now he needs must play a part  
Wherein was something to be done,  
If he would not be left alone  
Life-long, with love unsatisfied.

So now he rose, and looking wide  
Along the edges of the bay,  
Saw where his fellows' tall ship lay  
Anigh the haven, and a boat  
'Twixt shore and ship-side did there float  
With balanced oars; but on the shroud  
A shipman stood, and shouted loud  
Unto the boat—words lost, in sooth,  
But which no less the trembling youth  
Deemed certainly of him must be  
And where he was; then suddenly  
He turned, though none pursued, and fled  
Along the sands, nor turned his head  
Till round a headland he did reach  
A long cove with a sandy beach;  
Then looking landward he saw where  
A streamlet cleft the sea-cliffs bare,  
Making a little valley green,  
Beset with thorn-trees; and between  
The yellow strand and cliff's grey brow  
Was built a cottage white and low  
Within a little close, upon  
The green slope that the stream had won



## ACONTIUS AND CYDIPPE

From rock and sea ; and thereby stood  
A fisher, whose grey homespun hood  
Covered white locks : so presently  
Acontius to that man drew nigh,  
Because he seemed the man to be  
Who told of that fair company,  
Decming that more might there be learned  
About the flame wherewith he burned.

Withal he found it even so,  
And that the old man him did know,  
And greeted him, and fell to talk,  
As such folk will of things that balk  
The poor man's fortune, waves and winds,  
And changing days and great men's minds ;  
And at the last it so befell  
That this Acontius came to tell  
A tale unto the man—how he  
Was fain to 'scape the uneasy sea,  
And those his fellows, and would give  
Gold unto him, that he might live  
In hiding there, till they had sailed.  
Not strange it was if he prevailed  
In few words, though the elder smiled  
As not all utterly beguiled,  
Nor curious therewithal to know  
Such things as he cared not to show.

So there alone a while he dwelt,  
And lonely there, all torment felt,  
As still his longing grew and grew ;

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

And ever as hot noontide drew  
From dewy dusk and sunny morn,  
He felt himself the most forlorn ;  
For then the best he pictured her :

“Now the noon wind, the scent-bearer,  
Is busy midst her gown,” he said,  
“The fresh-plucked flowers about her head  
Are drooping now with their desire ;  
The grass with unconsuming fire  
Faints 'neath the pressure of her feet ;  
The honey-bees her lips would meet,  
But fail for fear ; the swift's bright eyes  
Are eager round the mysteries  
Of the fair hidden fragrant breast,  
Where now alone may I know rest—  
—Ah pity me, thou pitiless !  
Bless me who know'st not how to bless ;  
Fall from thy height, thou highest of all,  
On me a very wretch to call !  
Thou, to whom all things fate doth give,  
Find without me thou canst not live !  
Desire me, O thou world's desire,  
Light thy pure heart at this base fire !  
Save me, of whom thou knowest nought,  
Of whom thou never hadst a thought !  
O queen of all the world, stoop down,  
Before my feet cast thou thy crown !  
Speak to me, as I speak to thee !”

He walked beside the summer sea  
As thus he spake, at eventide ;

## ACONTIUS AND CYDIPPE

Across the waste of waters wide ;  
The dead sun's light a wonder cast,  
That into grey night faded fast ;  
And ever as the shadows fell,  
More formless grew the unbreaking swell  
Far out to sea ; more strange and white,  
More vocal through the hushing night,  
The narrow line of changing foam,  
That 'twixt the sand and fishes' home  
Writhed, driven onward by the tide—  
—So slowly by the ocean's side  
He paced, till dreamy passion grew ;  
The soft wind o'er the sea that blew  
Dried the cold tears upon his face,  
Kindly if sad seemed that lone place,  
Yea, in a while it scarce seemed lone,  
When now at last the white moon shone  
Upon the sea, and showed that still  
It quivered, though a moveless hill  
A little while ago it seemed.

So, turning homeward now, he dreamed  
Of many a help and miracle,  
That in the olden time befell  
Unto love's servants ; e'en when he  
Had clomb the hill anigh the sea,  
And reached the hut now litten bright,  
Not utterly with food and light  
And common talk his dream passed by.  
Yea, and with all this, presently  
'Gan tell the old man when it was

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

That the great feast should come to pass  
Unto Diana : Yea, and then  
He, among all the sons of men,  
E'en of that very love must speak ;  
Then grew Acontius faint and weak,  
And his mouth twitched, and tears began  
To pain his eyes ; for the old man,  
As one possessed, went on to tell  
Of all the loveliness that well  
Acontius wotted of, and now  
For the first time he came to know  
What name among her folk she had,  
And, half in cruel pain, half glad,  
He heard the old man say :

“ Indeed  
This sweet Cydippe hath great need  
Of one to save her life from woe,  
Because or ere the brook shall flow  
Narrow with August 'twixt its banks,  
Her folk, to win Diana's thanks,  
Shall make her hers, and she shall be  
Honoured of all folk certainly,  
But unwed, shrunk as time goes on  
Into a sour-hearted crone.”

Acontius 'gan the room to pace  
Ere he had done ; with curious face  
The old man gazed, but uttered nought ;  
Then in his heart Acontius thought,  
“ Ah, when her image passeth by  
Like a sweet breath, the blinded eye

## ACONTIUS AND CYDIPPE

Gains sight, the deaf man heareth well,  
The dumb man lovesome tales can tell,  
Hopes dead for long rise from their tombs,  
The barren like a garden blooms ;  
And I alone—I sit and wait,  
With deedless hands, on black-winged fate.”

And so, when men had done with day,  
Sleepless upon his bed he lay,  
Striving to think if aught might move  
Hard fate to give him his own love ;  
And thought of what would do belike,  
And said, “To-morrow will I strike  
Before the iron groweth dull.”  
And so, with mind of strange things full,  
Just at the dawn he fell asleep,  
Yet as the shadows ’gan to creep  
Up the long slope before the sun,  
His blinking, troubled sleep was done ;  
And with a start he sat upright,  
Now deeming that the glowing light  
Was autumn’s very sun, that all  
Of ill had happed that could befall ;  
Yet fully waked up at the last,  
From out the cottage-door he passed,  
And saw how the old fisherman  
His coble through the low surf ran  
And shouted greeting from the sea ;  
Then ’neath an ancient apple-tree,  
That on the little grassy slope  
Stood speckled with the autumn’s hope

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

He cast him down, and slept again ;  
And sleeping dreamed about his pain,  
Yet in the same place seemed to be,  
Beneath the ancient apple-tree.  
So in his dream he heard a sound  
Of singing fill the air around,  
And yet saw nought ; till in a while  
The twinkling sea's uncounted smile  
Was hidden by a rosy cloud,  
That seemed some wondrous thing to shroud,  
For in its midst a bright spot grew  
Brighter and brighter, and still drew  
Unto Acontius, till at last  
A woman from amidst it passed,  
And, wonderful in nakedness,  
With rosy feet the grass did press,  
And drew anigh ; he durst not move  
Or speak, because the Queen of Love  
He deemed he knew ; she smiled on him,  
And, even as his dream waxed dim,  
Upon the tree-trunk gnarled and grey  
A slim hand for a while did lay ;  
Then all waxed dark, and then once more  
He lay there as he lay before,  
But all burnt up the green-sward was,  
And songless did the throstle pass  
'Twixt dark green leaf and golden fruit,  
And at the old tree's knotted root  
The basket of the gatherer  
Lay, as though autumn-tide were there.  
Then in his dream he thought he strove

## ACONTIUS AND CYDIPPE

To speak that sweet name of his love  
Late learned, but could not; for away  
Sleep passed, and now in sooth he lay  
Awake within the shadow sweet,  
The sunlight creeping o'er his feet.

Then he arose to think upon  
The plans that he from night had won,  
And still in each day found a flaw,  
That night's half-dreaming eyes ne'er saw,  
And far away all good hope seemed,  
And the strange dream he late had dreamed  
Of no account he made, but thought  
That it had come and gone for nought.

And now the time went by till he  
Knew that his keel had put to sea,  
Yet after that a day or two  
He waited, ere he dared to do  
The thing he longed for most, and meet  
His love within the garden sweet.  
He saw her there, he saw a smile  
The paleness of her face beguile  
Before she saw him; then his heart  
With pity and remorse 'gan smart;  
But when at last she turned her head,  
And he beheld the bright flush spread  
Over her face, and once again  
The pallor come, 'twixt joy and pain  
His heart was torn; he turned away,  
Thinking: "Long time ere that worst day

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

That unto her a misery  
Will be, yea even as unto me,  
And many a thing ere then may fall,  
Or peaceful death may end it all."

The host that night his heart did bless  
With praises of her loveliness  
Once more, and said: "Yea, fools men are  
Who work themselves such bitter care  
That they may live when they are dead;  
Her mother's stern cold hardihead  
Shall make this sweet but dead-alive;  
For who in all the world shall strive  
With such an oath as she shall make?"

Acontius, for self-pity's sake,  
Must steal forth to the night to cry  
Some wordless prayer of agony;  
And yet, when he was come again,  
Of more of such-like speech was fain,  
And needs must stammer forth some word,  
That once more the old fisher stirred  
To speech; who now began to tell  
Tales of that oath as things known well,  
To wise men from the days of old,  
Of how a mere chance-word would hold  
Some poor wretch as a life-long slave;  
Nay, or the very wind that drave  
Some garment's hem, some lock of hair  
Against the dreadful altar there,  
Had turned a whole sweet life to ill;  
So heedfully must all fulfil



## ACONTIUS AND CYDIPPE

Their vows unto the dreadful maid.  
Acontius heard the words he said  
As through a thin sleep fraught with dreams,  
Yet afterward would fleeting gleams  
Of what the old man said confuse  
His weary heart, that ne'er was loose  
A minute from the bonds of love,  
And still of all, strange dreams he wove.

So the time passed ; a brooding life,  
That with his love might hold no strife,  
Acontius led ; he did not spare  
With torment vain his soul to tear  
By meeting her in that same place :  
No fickle hope now changed her face,  
No hot desire therein did burn,  
Rather it seemed her heart did yearn  
With constant sorrow, and such love  
As surely might the hard world move.  
—Ah ! shall it ? Love shall go its ways,  
And sometimes gather useless praise  
From joyful hearts, when now at rest  
The lover lies, but oftenest  
To hate thereby the world is moved,  
But oftenest the well-beloved  
Shall pay the kiss back with a blow,  
Shall smile to see the hot tears flow,  
Shall answer with scarce-hidden scorn  
The bitter words by anguish torn  
From such a heart, as fain would rest  
Silent until death brings the best.

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

So drew the time on to the day  
When all hope must be cast away ;  
Late summer now was come, and still  
As heeding neither good or ill  
Of living men, the stream ran down  
The green slope to the sea-side brown,  
Singing its changeless song ; still there  
Acontius dwelt 'twixt slope-side fair  
And changing murmur of the sea.

The night before all misery  
Should be accomplished, red-eyed, wan,  
He gave unto the ancient man  
What wealth he had, and bade farewell  
In such a voice as tale doth tell  
Unto the wise ; then to his bed  
He crept, and still his weary head  
Tossed on the pillow, till the dawn  
The fruitful mist from earth had drawn.  
Once more with coming light he slept,  
Once more from out his bed he leapt,  
Thinking that he had slept too fast,  
And that all hope was over-past ;  
And with that thought he knew indeed  
How good is hope to man at need,  
Yea, even the least ray thereof.  
Then dizzy with the pain of love  
He went from out the door, and stood  
Silent within the fruitful rood.  
Still was the sunny morn and fair,  
A scented haze was in the air ;

## ACONTIUS AND CYDIPPE

So soft it was, it seemed as spring  
Had come once more her arms to fling  
About the dying year, and kiss  
The lost world into dreams of bliss.

Now 'neath the tree he sank adown,  
Parched was the sward thereby and brown,  
Save where about the knotted root  
A green place spread. The golden fruit  
Hung on the boughs, lay on the ground;  
The spring-born thrushes lurked around,  
But sang not, yet the stream sang well,  
And gentle tales the sea could tell.  
Ere sunrise was the fisher gone,  
And now his brown-sailed boat alone,  
Some league or so from off the shore,  
Moved slowly 'neath the sweeping oar.  
So soothed by sights and sounds that day,  
Sore weary, soon Acontius lay  
In deep sleep as he erst had done,  
And dreamed once more, nor yet had gone  
E'en this time from that spot of ground;  
And once more dreaming heard the sound  
Of unseen singers, and once more  
A pink-tinged cloud spread thwart the shore,  
And a vague memory touched him now  
Amidst his sleep; his knitted brow  
'Gan to unfold, a happy smile  
His long love-languor did beguile  
As from the cloud the naked one  
Came smiling forth—but not alone;

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

For now the image of his love,  
Clad like the murmuring summer dove,  
She held by the slim trembling hand,  
And soon he deemed the twain did stand  
Anigh his head. Round Venus' feet  
Outbroke the changing spring-flowers sweet  
From the parched earth of autumn-tide;  
The long locks round her naked side  
The sea-wind drave; lily and rose,  
Plucked from the heart of her own close,  
Were girdle to her, and did cling,  
Mixed with some marvellous golden thing,  
About her neck and bosom white,  
Sweeter than their shortlived delight.  
And all the while, with eyes that bliss  
Changed not, her doves brushed past to kiss  
The marvel of her limbs; yet strange,  
With loveliness that knows no change,  
Fair beyond words as she might be,  
So fell it by love's mystery  
That open-mouthed Acontius lay  
In that sweet dream, nor drew away  
His eyes from his love's pitying eyes;  
And at the last he strove to rise,  
And dreamed that touch of hand in hand  
Made his heart faint; alas! the band  
Of soft sleep, overstrained therewith,  
Snapped short, and left him there to writhe  
In helpless woe.

Yet in a while  
Strange thoughts anew did him beguile;

## ACONTIUS AND CYDIPPE

Well-nigh he dreamed again, and saw  
The naked goddess toward him draw,  
Until the sunshine touched his face,  
And stark awake in that same place  
He sighed, and rose unto his knee,  
And saw beneath the ancient tree,  
Close by his hand, an apple lie,  
Great, smooth, and golden. Dreamily  
He turned it o'er, and in like mood  
A long sharp thorn, as red as blood,  
He took into his hand, and then,  
In language of the Grecian men,  
Slowly upon its side he wrote,  
As one who thereof took no note,  
*Acontius will I wed to-day ;*  
Then stealthily across the bay  
He glanced, and trembling gat him down  
With hurried steps unto the town,  
Where for the high-tide folk were dight,  
And all looked joyous there and bright,  
As toward the fane their steps they bent.  
And thither, too, Acontius went,  
Scarce knowing if on earth or air  
His feet were set ; he coming there,  
Gat nigh the altar standing-place,  
And there with haggard eyes 'gan gaze  
Upon the image of the maid  
Whose wrath makes man and beast afraid

So in a while the rites began,  
And many a warrior and great man

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Served the hard-hearted one, until  
Of everything she had her fill  
That Gods desire ; and, trembling now,  
Acontius heard the curved horns blow  
That heralded the damsels' band ;  
And scarce for faintness might he stand,  
When now, the minstrels' gowns of gold  
Being past, he could withal behold  
White raiment fluttering, and he saw  
The fellows of his own love draw  
Unto the altar ; here and there  
The mothers of those maidens fair  
Went by them, proud belike, and fain  
To note the honour they should gain.

Now scarce with hungry eyes might he  
Gaze on those fair folk steadily,  
As one by one they passed by him ;  
His limbs shook, and his eyes did swim,  
And if he heard the words they said,  
As outstretched hand and humble head  
Strengthened the trembling maiden's vow,  
Nought of their meaning did he know—  
—And still she came not—what was this ?  
Had the dull death of hope of bliss  
Been her death too—ah, was she dead ?  
Or did she lie upon her bed,  
With panting mouth and fixed bright eyes,  
Waiting the new life's great surprise,  
All longings past, amid the hush  
Of life departing ?

## ACONTIUS AND CYDIPPE

A great rush  
Of fearful pain stopped all his blood  
As thus he thought ; a while he stood  
Blinded and tottering, then the air  
A great change on it seemed to bear,  
A heavenly scent ; and fear was gone,  
Hope but a name ; as if alone  
Mid images of men he was,—  
Alone with her who now did pass  
With fluttering hem and light footfall  
The corner of the precinct wall.  
Time passed, she drew nigh to the place  
Where he was standing, and her face  
Turned to him, and her steadfast eyes  
Met his, with no more of surprise  
Than if in words she had been told  
That each the other should behold  
E'en in such wise— Pale was she grown ;  
Her sweet breath, that an unheard moan  
Seemed to her lover, scarce might win  
Through her half-opened lips ; most thin  
The veil seemed 'twixt her mournful eyes,  
And death's long-looked-for mysteries ;  
Frail were her blue-veined hands ; her feet  
The pink-tinged marble steps did meet  
As though all will were gone from her.  
There went a matron, tall and fair,  
Noble to look on, by her side,  
Like unto her, but for cold pride  
And passing by of twenty years,  
And all their putting back of tears ;

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Her mother, certes, and a glow  
Of pleasure lit her stern face now  
At what that day should see well done.

But now, as the long train swept on,  
There on the last step of the fane  
She stood, so loved, so loved in vain ;  
Her mother fallen aback from her,  
Yet eager the first word to hear  
Of that her dreadful oath—so nigh  
Were misery to misery,  
That each might hear the other's breath ;  
That they this side of fair hope's death  
Might yet have clung breast unto breast,  
And snatched from life a little rest,  
And snatched a little joy from pain.

O weary hearts, shall all be vain,  
Shall all be nought, this strife and love ?  
—Once more with slow foot did she move  
Unto the last step, with no sound  
Unto Acontius turning round,  
Who spake not, but, as moved at last  
By some kind God, the apple cast  
Into her bosom's folds—once more  
She stayed, while a great flush came o'er  
Her sweet face erst half-dead and wan ;  
Then went a sound from man to man  
So fair she seemed, and some withal  
Failed not to note the apple fall  
Into her breast.



## ACONTIUS AND CYDIPPE

Now while with fear  
And hope Acontius trembled there  
And to her side her mother came,  
She cast aside both fear and shame  
From out her noble heart, and laid  
Upon the altar of the Maid  
Her fair right hand, clasped firm around  
The golden fruit, and with no sound  
Her lips moved, and her eyes upraised  
Upon the marble image gazed,  
With such a fervour as if she  
Would give the thing humanity  
And love and pity—then a space  
Unto her love she turned her face  
All full of love, as if to say,  
“So ends our trouble from to-day,  
Either with happy life or death.”

Yet anxious still, with held-back breath,  
He saw her mother come to her  
With troubled eyes. “What hast thou there?”  
He heard her say. “Is the vow made?  
I heard no word that thou hast said.”

Then through him did her sweet voice thrill :  
“No word I spake for good or ill ;  
But this spake for me ; so say ye  
What oath in written words may be ;  
Although, indeed, I wrote them nought ;  
And in my heart had got no thought,  
When first I came hereto this morn,

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

But here to swear myself forlorn  
Of love and hope—because the days  
Of life seemed but a weary maze,  
Begun without leave asked of me,  
Whose ending I might never see,  
Or what came after them—but now  
Backward my life I will not throw  
Into your deep-dug, spice-strewn grave,  
But either all things will I save  
This day, or make an end of all.”

Then silence on the place did fall ;  
With frowning face, yet hand that shook,  
The fated fruit her mother took  
From out her hand, and pale she grew,  
When the few written words she knew,  
And what they meant ; but speedily  
She brushed the holy altar by,  
Unto the wondering priests to tell  
What things there in their midst befell.

There, in low words, they spoke awhile,  
How they must deal with such a guile,  
Cast by the goddess of desire  
Into the holy maiden's fire.  
And to the priests it seemed withal,  
That a full oath they needs must call  
That writing on the altar laid :  
Then, wroth and fearful, some there bade  
To seek a death for these to die,  
If even so they might put by

## ACONTIUS AND CYDIPPE

The maid's dread anger ; crueller  
They grew as still they gathered fear,  
And shameful things the dusk fane heard,  
As grey beard wagged against grey beard,  
And fiercer grew the ancient eyes.

But from the crowd, meanwhile, did rise  
Great murmuring, for from man to man  
The rumour of the story ran,  
I know not how ; and therewithal  
Some god-sent lovesome joy did fall  
On all hearts there, until it seemed  
That each one of his own soul dreamed,  
Beloved, and loving well ; and when  
Some cried out that the ancient men  
Had mind to slay the lovers there,  
A fierce shout rent the autumn air :  
“Nay, wed the twain ; love willeth it !”  
But silent did the elders sit,  
With death and fear on either hand,  
Till one said, “ Fear not, the whole land,  
Not we, take back what they did give ;  
With many scarce can one man strive ;  
Let be, themselves shall make amends.”

“ Yea, let be,” said the next ; “ all ends,  
Despite the talk of mortal men,  
Who deem themselves undying, when,  
Urged by some unknown God's commands,  
They snatch at love with eager hands,  
And gather death that grows thereby,

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Yet swear that love shall never die—  
Let be—in their own hearts they bear  
The seeds of pangs to pierce and tear.  
What need, White-armed, to follow them,  
With well-strung bow and fluttering hem,  
Adown the tangle of life's wood?  
Thou knowest what the fates deem good  
For wretches that love overmuch—  
One mad desire for sight and touch;  
One spot alone of all the earth  
That seems to them of any worth;  
One sound alone that they may bear  
Amidst earth's joyful sounds to hear;  
And sight, and sound, and dwelling-place,  
And soft caressing of one face,  
Forbidden, and forbidden still,  
Or granted e'en for greater ill,  
But for a while, that they may be  
Sunk deeper into misery—  
—Great things are granted unto those  
That love not—far-off things brought close,  
Things of great seeming brought to nought,  
And miracles for them are wrought;  
All earth and heaven lie underneath  
The hand of him who wastes not breath  
In striving for another's love,  
In hoping one more heart to move.  
—A light thing and a little thing,  
Ye deem it, that two hearts should cling  
Each unto each, till two are one,  
And neither now can be alone?

## ACONTIUS AND CYDIPPE

O fools, who know not all has sworn  
That those shall ever be forlorn  
Who strive to bring this thing to pass—  
So is it now, as so it was,  
And so it shall be evermore,  
'Till the world's fashion is passed o'er."

White-bearded was the ancient man  
Who spoke, with wrinkled face and wan ;  
But as unto the porch he turned  
A red spot in his cheek there burned,  
And his eyes glittered, for, behold !  
Close by the altar's horns of gold,  
There stood the weary ones at last,  
Their arms about each other cast,  
Twain no more now, they said—no more  
What things soe'er fate had in store.  
Careless of life, careless of death ;  
Now, when each felt the other's breath  
On lip and cheek, and many a word  
By all the world beside unheard,  
Or heard and little understood,  
Each spake to each, and all seemed good ;  
Yea, though amid the world's great wrong,  
Their space of life should not be long ;  
O bitter-sweet if they must die !  
O sweet, too sweet, if time passed by,  
If time made nought for them, should find  
Their arms in such wise intertwined  
Years hence, with no change drawing near !

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Nor says the tale, nor might I hear,  
That aught of evil on them fell.  
Few folk there were but thought it well,  
When saffron-robed, fair-wreathed, loose-haired  
Cydippe through the city fared  
Well won at last ; when lingering shame  
Somewhat upon the lovers came,  
Now that all fear was quite bygone,  
And yet they were not all alone ;  
Because from men the sun was fain  
A little more of toil to gain,  
Awhile in prison of his light,  
To hold aback the close-lipped night.

## OCTOBER

SILENCE a little when the tale was told,  
Soon broken by the merry-voiced and bold  
Among the youths, though some belike were fain  
For more of silence yet, that their sweet pain  
Might be made sweeter still by hope and thought  
Amid the words of the old story caught—  
Might be made keener by the pensive eyes  
That half-confessed love made so kind and wise;  
Yet these two, midst the others, went their way,  
To get them through the short October day  
'Twixt toil and toilsome love, e'en as they might;  
If so, perchance, the kind and silent night  
Might yet reward their reverent love with dreams  
Less full of care.

But round the must's red streams,  
'Twixt the stripped vines the elders wandered slow,  
And unto them, e'en as a soothing show  
Was the hid longing, wild desire, blithe hope,  
That seethed there on the tangled sun-worn slope  
'Twixt noon and moonrise. Resolute were they  
To let no pang of memory mar their day,  
And long had fear, before the coming rest,  
Been set aside. And so the changed west,  
Forgotten of the sun, was grey with haze;  
The moon was high and bright, when through the maze  
Of draggled tendrils back at last they turned,

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

And red the lights within the fair house burned  
Through the grey night ; strained string, and measured  
voice  
Of minstrels, mingled with the varying noise  
Of those who through the deep-cut misty roads  
Went slowly homeward now to their abodes.  
A short space more of that short space was gone,  
Wherein each deemed himself not quite alone.



## OCTOBER

IN late October, when the failing year  
But little pleasure more for men might bear,  
They sat within the city's great guest-hall,  
So near the sea that they might hear the fall  
Of the low haven-waves when night was still.  
But on that day wild wind and rain did fill  
The earth and sea with clamour, and the street  
Held few who cared the driving scud to meet.  
But inside, as a little world it was,  
Peaceful amid the hubbub that did pass  
Its strong walls in untiring waves of rage,  
With the earth's intercourse wild war to wage.  
Bright glowed the fires, and cheerier their light  
Fell on the gold that made the fair place bright  
Of roof and wall, for all the outside din.  
Yet of the world's woe somewhat was within  
The noble compass of its walls, for there  
Were histories of great striving painted fair,  
Striving with love and hate, with life and death,  
With hope that lies, and fear that threateneth.

And so mid varied talk the day went by,  
As such days will, not quite unhappily,  
Not quite a burden, till the evening came  
With lulling of the storm: and little blame  
The dark had for the dull day's death, when now  
The good things of the hall were set aglow

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

By the great tapers. Midmost of the board  
Sat Rolf, the captain, who took up the word,  
And said :

“Fair fellows, a strange tale is this,  
Heard and forgotten midst my childish bliss,  
Little remembered midst the change and strife,  
Come back again this latter end of life,  
I know not why ; yet as a picture done  
For my delight, I see my father’s son,  
My father with the white cloth on his knees,  
Beaker in hand, amid the orange-trees  
At Micklegarth, and the high-hatted man  
Over against him, with his visage wan,  
Black beard, bright eyes, and thin composéd hands,  
Telling this story of the fiery lands.”

# THE MAN WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

## ARGUMENT

A CERTAIN man, who from rich had become poor, having been taken by one of his former friends to a fair house, was shown strange things there, and dwelt there awhile among a company of doleful men ; but these in the end dying, and he desiring above all things to know their story, so it happened that he at last learned it to his own cost.

A CITY was there nigh the Indian Sea,  
As tells my tale, where folk for many an age  
Had lived, perforce, such life as needs must be  
Beneath the rule of priestly king and mage,  
Bearing with patient hearts the summer's rage,  
Yea, even bowing foolish heads in vain  
Before the mighty sun, their life and bane.

Now ere the hottest of the summer came,  
While yet the rose shed perfume on the earth,  
And still the grass was green despite the flame  
Of that land's sun—while folk gave up to mirth  
A little of their life, so little worth,  
And the rich man forgot his fears awhile  
Beneath the soft eve's still recurring smile—

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Mid those sweet days, when e'en the burning land  
Knew somewhat of the green north's summer rest,  
A stately house within the town did stand,  
When the fresh morn was falling from its best,  
Though the street's pavement still the shadow blessed  
From whispering trees, that rose, thick-leaved and tall,  
Above the well-built marble bounding-wall.

Each side the door therein rose-garlands hung,  
And through the doorway you might see within  
The glittering robes of minstrel-men that sung,  
And resting dancing-girls in raiment thin,  
Because the master there did now begin  
Another day of ease and revelry,  
To make it harder yet for him to die.

And toward the door, perfumed and garlanded,  
The guests passed, clad in wonderful attire,  
And this and that one through the archway led  
Some girl, made languid by the rosy fire  
Of that fair time ; with love and sweet desire  
The air seemed filled, and how could such folk see  
In any eyes unspoken misery ?

Yet 'gainst the marble wall, anigh the door,  
A man leaned, gazing at the passers-by,  
Who, young, was clad in wretched clothes and poor,  
And whose pale face, grown thin with misery,  
Told truthful stories of his end anigh,  
For such a one was he as rich men fear,  
Friendless and poor, nor taught hard toil to bear ;

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

And some in passing by that woeful man  
A little time indeed their loud talk stayed  
To gaze upon his haggard face and wan,  
Some even, their hands upon their pouches laid,  
But all passed on again, as if afraid  
That, e'en in giving thanks for unasked gift,  
His dolorous voice their veil of joy would lift.

He asked for nought, nor did his weary eyes  
Meet theirs at all, until there came at last,  
On a white mule, and clad in noble guise,  
A lonely man, who by the poor wretch passed,  
And, passing, on his face a side-glance cast,  
Then o'er his shoulder eyed him, then drew rein  
And turned about, and came to him again ;

And said, "Thou hast the face of one I knew,  
Men called the Golden One, in such a town,  
Because they deemed his wealth for ever grew,  
E'en in such times as beats the richest down ;  
What stroke of hapless fate, then, hast thou known  
That thou hast come to such a state as this,  
To which the poorest peasant's would be bliss?"

The other raised his eyes, and stared awhile  
Into the speaker's face, as one who draws  
His soul from dreams, then with a bitter smile  
He said, "Firuz, thou askest of the cause  
Of this my death? I knew not the world's laws,  
But 'give to-day, and take to-morrow morn,'  
I needs must say, holding the wise in scorn.

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

“For even as with gifts contempt I bought,  
So knowledge buys disease, power loneliness,  
And honour fear, and pleasure pains unsought,  
And friendship anxious days of great distress,  
And love the hate of what we used to bless—  
Ah, I am wise, and wiser soon shall grow,  
And know the most that wise dead men can know.

“What shall I say? thou knowest the old tale;  
I gave, I spent, and then I asked in vain,  
And when I fell, my hands could scarce avail  
For any work; at last, worse woe to gain,  
I fled from folk who knew my present pain  
And ancient pleasure—’midst strange men I wait,  
In this strange town, the last new jest of fate.

“But since we talk of such-like merchandize,  
What gift has bought for thee an equal curse?  
Because, indeed, I deem by this thy guise  
Thou hast not reached the bottom of thy purse;  
Therefore, perchance, thy face seems something worse  
Than mine, for I shall die, but thou must live,  
More laughter yet unto the Gods to give?”

Nor did he speak these words unwarranted,  
For in the other’s face those signs there were  
That mark the soul wherein all hope is dead;  
While, with the new-born image of despair  
The first man played, and found life even there.  
Changeless his old friend’s face was grown, and he  
Had no more eyes things new or strange to see.

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

He said, "Then hast thou still a wish on earth ;  
Come now with me, if thou wouldst know my fate :  
Thou yet mayst win again that time of mirth  
When every day was as a flowery gate  
Through which we passed to joy, importunate  
To win us from the thought of yesterday,  
In whatso pleasures it had passed away !"

"Great things thou promisest," the other said,  
"And yet indeed since I have feared to die,  
Though well I know that I were better dead,  
The life thou givest me I yet will try ;  
It will not be so long in passing by,  
If it must be such life as thou hast shared—  
Yet thanks to thee who thus for me hast cared."

"Friend," said he, "in thine hand thy life thou hast,  
If thou hast told me all that grieveth thee,  
And unto thee the past may well be past,  
And days not wholly bad thou yet mayst see ;  
And if indeed thy first felicity  
Thou winnest not, yet something shalt thou have  
Thy soul from death, or loathed life, to save.

"And for thy thanks, something I deem I owe  
To our old friendship, could I mind it aught,  
And well it is that I should pay it now  
While yet I have a little wavering thought  
Of things without me : neither have I brought  
A poisoned life to give to thee to-day,  
Or such a life as I have cast away."

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

“Nay,” said he, “let all be since I must live,  
I will not think of how to play my part :  
And now some food to me thou needs must give,  
For wretched hunger gnaweth at my heart.  
Take heed withal that old desires will start  
Up to the light since first I heard thee speak,  
Wretched as now I am, and pined and weak.”

Firuz thenceforward scarcely seemed to heed  
What words he said, but as a man well taught  
To do some dull task, set himself to lead  
That man unto an hostel, where they brought  
Food unto him, and raiment richly wrought ;  
Then he being mounted on a mule, the twain  
Set out therefrom some new abode to gain.

**N**OW cheered by food, and hope at least of ease,  
Perchance of something more, as on they went  
Betwixt the thronged streets and the palaces,  
No more did Bharam keep his head down bent,  
Rather from right to left quick glances sent,  
And though his old complaints he murmured still,  
He scarcely thought his life so lost and ill. :

But for his fellow, worse he seemed to be  
Than e'en before, his thin face pinched and grey,  
Seemed sunk yet deeper into misery,  
Nor did he lift his eyes from off the way,



## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

Nor heed what things his friend to him might say,  
But plodded on till they were past the town,  
When now the fiery sun was falling down.

Then by the farms and fields they went, until  
All tillage and smooth ways were left behind,  
And half-way up a bare and rugged hill  
They entered a rude forest close and blind,  
And many a tale perforce seized Bharam's mind  
Of lonely men by fiends bewildered,  
So like his fellow looked to one long dead.

But now, as careless what might hap to him,  
He 'gan to sing of roses and delight  
Some snatch, until the wood that had been dim,  
E'en in broad day, grew black with coming night;  
Then lower sank his song, and dropped outright,  
When on his rein he felt his guide's hand fall,  
And still they pierced that blackness like a wall.

Thus on the little-beaten forest-soil  
They went, with nought to see, and nought to hear  
Except their mules' unceasing, patient toil:  
But full the darkness seemed of forms of fear,  
And like long histories passed the minutes drear  
To Bharam's o'erwrought mind expecting death,  
And like a challenge seemed his lowest breath.

How long they went he knew not, but at last  
Upon his face he felt a doubtful breeze,  
Quickening his soul, and onward as they passed

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

A feeble glimmer showed betwixt the trees,  
And his eyes, used to darkness, by degrees  
Could dimly see his fellow, and the way  
Whereon they rode to some unearthly day.

Then as the boughs grew thinner overhead,  
That glimmer widened into moonlit night,  
And 'twixt the trees grown sparse their pathway led  
Unto a wide bare plain, that 'neath that light  
Against the black trunks showed all stark and white ;  
Then Bharam, more at ease thereat, began  
His fellow's visage in that light to scan.

No change was in his face, and if he knew  
Who rode beside him, 'twas but as some hook  
Within an engine knows what it must do.  
His hand indeed from his friend's rein he took,  
But never cast on him one slightest look ;  
Then, shuddering, Bharam 'gan to sing again  
To make him turn, but spent his breath in vain.

But when the trees were wholly past, afar  
Across the plain they saw a watch-tower high,  
That 'neath the moonlight, like an angry star,  
Shone over a white palace, and thereby  
Within white walls did black-treed gardens lie :  
And Firuz smote his mule and hastened on  
To where that distant sign of trouble shone.

And as they went, thereon did Bharam stare,  
Nor turned his eyes at all unto the plain,  
Nor heeded when from out her form the hare

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

Started beneath the mule's feet, and in vain  
The owl called from the wood, for he drew rein  
Within a little while before the gate,  
Casting his soul into the hands of fate.

Then Firuz blew the horn, nor waited long  
Ere the gate, opened by a man scarce seen,  
Gave entry to a garden, where the song  
Of May's brown bird had hardly left the green  
Sweet-blossomed tree-tops lonely, and between  
The whispering glades the fountain leaped on high,  
And the rose waited till morn came, to die.

But when the first wave of that soft delight  
Swept o'er the spendthrift's sense, he smiled and turned  
Unto his guide throughout the wondrous night,  
And while his heart with hope and wonder burned,  
He said, "Indeed a fair thing have I learned  
With thee for master ; yet is this the end ?  
Will they not now bring forth the bride, O friend ?"

Drunk with the sweetness of that place he spoke,  
And hoped to see the mask fall suddenly  
From his friend's face, from whose thin lips there broke  
A dreadful cry of helpless misery,  
Scaring the birds from flowery bush and tree ;  
"O fool !" he said ; "say such things in the day,  
When noise and light take memory more away !"

Bharam shrank back abashed, nor had a word  
To say thereto, and 'twixt the trees they rode,  
Noted of nothing but some wakeful bird,

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Until they reached a fair and great abode  
Whereon the red gold e'en in moonlight glowed.  
There silently they lighted down before  
Smooth marble stairs, and through the open door

They entered a great, dimly-lighted hall ;  
Yet through the dimness well our man could see  
How fair the hangings were that clad the wall,  
And what a wealth of beast and flower and tree  
Was spent wherever carving there might be,  
And what a floor was 'neath his wearied feet,  
Not made for men who call death rest and sweet.

Now he, though fain to linger and to ask  
What was the manner of their living there,  
And what thenceforth should be his proper task,  
And who his fellows were, did nowise dare  
To meet that cry again that seemed to bare  
A wretched life of every softening veil—  
A dreadful prelude to a dreadful tale.

So silently whereas the other led  
He followed, and through corridors they passed,  
Dim lit, but worthy of a king new wed,  
Till to a chamber did they come at last,  
O'er which a little light a taper cast,  
And showed a fair bed by the window-side ;  
Therewith at last turned round the dreary guide,

And said, " O thou to whom night still is night  
And day is day, bide here until the morn,  
And take some little of that dear delight,

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

That we for many a long day have outworn.  
Sleep, and forget awhile that thou wast born,  
And on the morrow will I come to thee  
To show thee what thy life with us must be."

And with that word he went, and though at first  
The other thought that he should never sleep  
For wondering what had made that house accursed,  
And sunk that seeming bliss in woe so deep,  
Yet o'er his soul forgetfulness did creep,  
And in a dreamless slumber long he lay,  
Not knowing when the sun brought back the day.

But in broad daylight of the following morn  
He woke, and o'er him saw his fellow stand,  
Who seemed, if it could be, yet more forlorn  
Than when he last reached out to him his hand.  
But now he said, "Come thou and see the band  
Of folk that thou shalt dwell with, and the home  
Whereto, fate leading thee, thou now hast come."

He rose without a word, and went with him  
Who led the way through pillared passages,  
Dainty with marble walls, made cool and dim  
By the o'erhanging boughs of thick-leaved trees  
That brushed against their windows in the breeze,  
And still the work of one all seemed to be  
Who had a mind to mock eternity.

Too lovely seemed that place for any one  
But youths and damsels, who, not growing old,  
Should dwell there, knowing not the scorching sun,

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Without a name for misery or for cold,  
Without a use for glittering steel or gold  
Except adornment, and content withal,  
Though change or passion there should ne'er befall.

And still despite his fellow's woeful face,  
And that sad cry that smote him yesternight,  
The strange luxurious perfume of that place,  
Where everything seemed wrought for mere delight,  
Still made his heart beat, and his eyes wax bright  
With delicate desires new-born again,  
In that sweet rest from poverty and pain.

And, looking through the windows there askance,  
He yet had something like a hope to see  
The garden blossom into feast and dance,  
Or, turning round a corner suddenly,  
Mid voices sweet, and perfumed gowns to be  
Bewildered by white limbs and glittering eyes,  
Striving to learn love's inmost mysteries.

But as they went, unto a door they came  
That Firuz opened, showing a great hall  
Whose walls with wealth of strange-wrought gold did flame  
Through a cool twilight, for the light did fall  
From windows in the dome high up and small,  
And Bharam's lustful hope was quenched in fear,  
As he, low moaning and faint sobs could hear.

He stopped and shut his eyes, oppressed with awe,  
Thinking the rites of some sad god to see—  
The secrets of some blood-stained hidden law—

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

But Firuz grasped his arm impatiently,  
And drew him in. "O friend, look up!" said he,  
"Nought dwelleth here but man's accursed race,  
And thou art far the mightiest in this place."

Then he, though trembling still, looked up, and there  
Beheld six men clad even as his guide,  
Who sat upon a bench of marble fair  
Against the wall, and some their eyes must hide  
When they met his, and some rose up and cried  
Words inarticulate, then sank again  
Into their places, as out-worn with pain.

But one against the wall, with head back thrown,  
Was leaning, and his eyes wide open stared,  
And by his side his nerveless hands hung down,  
Nor showed his face a glimmer of surprise;  
Deaf was he to the wisest of the wise,  
Speechless though open-mouthed; for there sat he,  
Dead midst the living slaves of misery.

Bharam stared at him, wondering, still in dread;  
But no heed took his fellows of his case,  
Till Firuz, with a side-glance at him, said,  
"Why mourn ye more that yet another face  
Must see our shame and sorrow in this place?  
Do ye not know this worldly man is come  
To lay the last one of us in his home?"

"And now in turn another soul is gone,  
Get ready then to bear him forth straightway.  
Be patient, for the heavy days crawl on!"

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

But thou, O friend, I pray thee from this day  
Help thou us helpless men, who cannot pray  
Even to die; no long time will it be  
Ere we shall leave this countless wealth to thee.

“Behold, a master, not a slave, we need,  
For we, I say, have neither will to die  
Nor yet to live, yet will we pay good heed  
To thy commands, still doing patiently  
Our daily tasks, as the dull time goes by;  
Drive us like beasts, yea, slay us if thou wilt,  
Nor will our souls impute to thee the guilt.

“Yet ask us not to tell thee of our tale,  
Why we are brought unto this sad estate,  
Nor for the rest will any words avail  
To make us flee from this lone house, where fate  
With all its cruel sport will we await;  
Lo, now thy task, O fellow, in return  
A mighty kingdom's wealth thou soon shalt earn.”

Now as he spoke, a hard forgetfulness  
Of his own lot, the rich man's cruel pride,  
Smote Bharam's heart; he thought, “What dire distress  
Could make me cast all hope of life aside?  
Could aught but death my life and will divide?  
Surely this mood of theirs will pass away  
And these walls yet may see a merry day.”

So thought he, yet, beholding them again,  
And seeing them so swallowed up with woe  
That they scarce heeded him, a pang of pain



## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

Like pleasure's death throughout his heart did go ;  
And therewithal a strong desire to know  
The utmost of their tale possessed his mind,  
And made him scorn an easy life and blind.

So midst his silence neither spoke they aught :  
Firuz himself, as one, who having laid  
His charge upon another, may take thought  
Of his own miseries, sat with head down-weighed,  
With tears that would not flow ; then Bharam said,  
"Masters, I bid you rise and do your best  
To give your fellow's body its due rest ! "

They rose up at his words and straight began,  
As men who oft had had such things to do,  
To dress the body of the just-dead man  
For his last resting-place, then two and two  
They bore it forth, passing the chambers through,  
Where Bharam on that morn had hoped to see  
Fair folk that had no name for misery.

Then through the sunny pleasance slow they passed,  
That sweet with flowers behind the palace lay,  
Until they reached a thick, black wood at last,  
Bounding the garden as the night bounds day,  
And through a narrow path they took their way,  
Less like to men than shadows in a dream,  
Till the wood ended at a swift broad stream.

Beneath the boughs dark green it ran, and deep,  
Well-nigh awash with the wood's tangled grass,  
But on the other side wall-like and steep,

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Straight from the gurgling eddies, rose a mass  
Of dark grey cliff, no man unhelped could pass ;  
But a low door e'en in the very base  
Was set, above the water's hurrying race.

Of iron seemed that door to Bharam's eyes,  
Heavily wrought, and closely locked it seemed ;  
But as he stared thereon strange thoughts would rise  
Within his heart, until he well-nigh deemed  
That he in morning sleep of such things dreamed,  
And dreamed that he had seen all this before,  
Wood and deep river, cliff, and close-shut door.

But in the stream, and close unto his feet,  
A boat there lay, as though for wafting o'er  
Whoso had will such doubtful things to meet  
As that strange door might hide ; and on the shore,  
About the path, a rod of ground or more  
Was cleared of wood, in which space here and there  
Low changing mounds told of dead men anear.

So there that doleful company made stay,  
And 'twixt the trees and swift stream hurrying by,  
Their brother's body in the earth did lay.  
Nor ever to the cliff would raise an eye,  
But trembling, as with added agony,  
Did their dull task as swiftly as they could,  
Then went their way again amidst the wood.

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

NOW with these dreary folk must Bharam live  
Henceforward, doing even as he would ;  
And many a joy the palace had to give  
To such a man as e'en could find life good  
So prisoned, and with nought to stir the blood,  
And seeing still from weary day to day  
These wretched mourners cast their lives away.

Yet came deliverance ; one by one they died,  
E'en as new-come he saw that man die first,  
And so were buried by the river-side.  
And ever as he saw these men accurst  
Vanish from life, he grew the more athirst  
To know what evil deed had been their bane,  
But still were all his prayers therefor in vain.

His utmost will in all things else they did,  
Serving as slaves if he demanded aught,  
But in grim silence still their story hid ;  
Nor did he fare the better when he sought  
In the fair parchments that scribes' hands had wrought  
Within that house. Of many a tale they told ;  
But none the tale of that sad life did hold.

Therefore in silence he consumed his days  
Until a weary year had clean gone by  
Since first upon that palace he did gaze,  
And all that doleful band had he seen die,

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Except Firuz ; and ever eagerly  
Did Bharam watch him, lest he too should go,  
And make an end of all he longed to know.

At last a day came when the mourner said,  
“ Beneath the ground my woe thou soon shalt lay,  
And all our foolish sorrow shall be dead ;  
Come then, I fain would show thee the straight way  
Through which we came the night of that past day  
When first I brought thee here. This knowledge thine,  
Guard thou this house, and use it as a mine ;

“ While safe thou dwellest in some city fair,—  
Hasten, for little strength is in me now ! ”  
But Bharam thought, “ Yet will he not lay bare  
His story to me utterly, and show  
What thing it was that brought these men so low.”  
Yet said he nought, but from the house they went,  
While painfully the mourner on him leant.

So, the wood gained, by many glades they passed  
That Firuz heeded not, though they were wide,  
Until they reached a certain one at last,  
Whereon he said, “ Here did we come that tide ;  
I counsel thee no longer to abide  
When I am dead, but mount my mule and go,  
Nor doubt the beast the doubtful way shall know.

“ She too shall serve thee when thou com'st again,  
With many men, and sumpter mules enow  
To gather up the wealth we held in vain,—  
Turn me, I would depart ! fainter I grow !

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

And thou the road to happy life dost know.  
Alas, my feet are heavy! nor can I  
Go any further. Lay me down to die!"

Then 'gainst a tree-root Bharam laid his head,  
Saying, "Fear not, thou hast been good to me,  
And by the river-side, when thou art dead,  
I will not fail to lay thee certainly!"  
"Nay, nay," he said, "what matter—let it be!  
I bring the dismal rite unto an end.  
Hide my bones here, and toward thy city wend!"

"Better perchance that thou beholdest not  
That place once more, our misery and our bane!"  
Then at that word did Bharam's heart wax hot;  
He seemed at point his whole desire to gain.  
He cried aloud, "Nay, surely all in vain  
Thy secret hast thou hidden till this day,  
Since to the mystic road thou showest the way!"

"My will is weak," his friend said, "thine is strong;  
Draw near, and I will tell thee all the tale,  
If this my feeble voice will last so long.  
Perchance my dying words may yet avail  
To make thee wise. This pouch of golden scale,  
Open thou it. The gold key hid therein  
Opens the story of our foolish sin.

"How thy face flushes, holding it! Just so,  
As by that door I stood, did my face burn  
That summer morning past so long ago.  
Draw nigher still if thou the tale wouldst learn.

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

I scarce can speak now, and withal I yearn  
To die at last, and leave the thing unsaid.  
Raise thou me up, or I shall soon be dead ! ”

His fellow raised him trembling, nor durst speak  
Lest he should scare his feeble life away,  
Then from his mouth came wailing words, and weak :  
“ Where art thou then, O loveliest one, to-day ?  
Beneath the odorous boughs that gladden May,  
Laid in the thymy hollow of some hill,  
Dost thou remember me a little still ?

“ Can kindness such as thine was, vanish quite  
And be forgotten ? Ah, if I forget,  
Canst thou forget the love and fresh delight  
That held thee then—my love that even yet  
Midst other love must make thy sweet eyes wet,  
At least sometimes, at least when heaven and earth  
In some fair eve are grown too fair for mirth ?

“ O joy departed, know'st thou how at first  
I prayed in vain, and strove with hope to dull  
My ravening hunger, mock my quenchless thirst ?  
And know'st thou not how when my life was full  
Of nought but pain, I strove asleep to lull  
My longing for the eyeless, hopeless rest,  
Lest even yet strange chance should bring the best ?

“ Farewell, farewell, belovéd ! I depart,  
But hope, once dead, now liveth though I die,  
Whispering of marvels to my fainting heart—  
Perchance the memory of some written lie,

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

Perchance the music of the rest anigh ;  
I know not—but farewell, be no more sad !  
For life and love that has been, I am glad.”

He ceased, and his friend, trembling, faintly said—  
“ Wilt thou not speak to me, what hast thou done ? ”  
But even as he spoke, the mourner’s head  
Fell backward, and his troubled soul was gone ;  
And Bharam, in the forest left alone,  
Durst scarcely move at first for very fear  
And longing for the tale he was to hear.

But in a while the body down he laid,  
And swiftly gat him o’er the hot dry plain,  
And through the garden, as a man afraid,  
Went softly, and the golden porch did gain,  
And from the wealth those men had held in vain,  
Most precious things he did not spare to take  
For his new life and joyous freedom’s sake.

So doing he came round unto the door  
That led out to the passage through the wood,  
Wherethrough the mourners erst their dead ones bore  
Down to the river ; but as there he stood  
He felt a new fire kindling in his blood ;  
His sack he laid aside, and touched the key  
That could unlock that dreadful history ;

And his friend’s words, that loving tender voice  
He sent forth ere he died, smote on his heart :  
How could he leave those dead men and rejoice  
With folk who in their story had no part ?

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Yea, as he lingered did the hot tears start  
Into his eyes, he wept, and knew not why ;  
Some pleasure seemed within his grasp to lie

He could not grasp or name, and none the less  
He muttered to himself, "I must be gone  
Or I shall die in this fair wilderness,  
That every minute seems to grow more lone ;  
Why do I stand here like a man of stone ?"  
And with that very word he moved indeed,  
But took the path that toward the stream did lead.

Quickly he walked with pale face downward bent,  
As 'twixt the trembling tulip-beds he passed,  
Until a horror seized him as he went,  
And, turning toward the house, he ran full fast,  
Nor, till he reached it, one look backward cast ;  
And by the gathered treasure, left behind  
Awhile ago, he stood confused, half blind.

Then slowly did he lift the precious weight,  
Yet lingered still. "Ah, must I go ?" he said,  
"Have I no heart to meet that unknown fate ?  
And must I lead the life that once I led,  
Midst folk who will rejoice when I am dead ;  
Even as if they had not shared with me  
The fear and longing of felicity ?

"And yet indeed if I must live alone,  
If fellowship be but an empty dream,  
Is there not left a world that is mine own ?  
Am I not real, if all else doth but seem ?



## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

Yea, rather, with what wealth the world doth teem,  
When we are once content from us to cast  
The dreadful future and remorseful past."

A little while he lingered yet, and then  
As fearful what he might be tempted to,  
He hurried on until he reached again  
The outer door, and, sighing, passed therethrough,  
But still made haste to do what he must do,  
And found the mule and cast on her the sack,  
And took his way to that lone forest-track.

Mattock and spade with him too did he bear,  
And dug a grave beneath the spreading tree  
Whereby Firuz had died, and laid him there,  
Thinking the while of all his misery,  
And muttering still, "How could it hap to me?  
Unless I died within a day or two  
Surely some deed I soon should find to do."

But when the earth on him he 'gan to throw,  
He said, "And shall I cast the key herein?  
What need have I this woeful tale to know,  
To vex me midst the fair life I shall win;  
Why do I seek to probe my fellow's sin,  
Who, living, saved my life from misery,  
And dying, gave this fresh life unto me?"

He kept the key, his words he answered not,  
But smoothed the earth above the mourner's head,  
Then mounting, turned away from that sad spot,  
Feverish with hope and change, bewildered,

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

And ever more oppressed with growing dread,  
As through the dark and silent wood he rode,  
And drew the nigher unto man's abode.

But when at last he met the broad sweet light  
Upon the hill's brow where that wood had end,  
And saw the open upland fresh and bright,  
A thrill of joy that sight through him must send,  
And with good heart he 'twixt the fields did wend,  
And not so much of that sad house he thought  
As of the wealthy life he thence had brought ;

So amidst thoughts of pleasant life and ease,  
Seemed all things fair that eve ; the peasant's door,  
The mother with the child upon her knees  
Sitting within upon the shaded floor ;  
While 'neath the trellised gourd some maid sung o'er  
Her lover to the rude lute's trembling strings,  
Her brown breast heaving 'neath the silver rings ;

The slender damsel coming from the well,  
Smiling beneath the flashing brazen jar,  
Her fellows left behind thereat, to tell  
How weary of her smiles her lovers are ;  
While the small children round wage watery war  
Till the thin linen more transparent grows,  
And ruddy brown the flesh beneath it glows ;

The trooper drinking at the homestead gate,  
Telling wild lies about the sword and spear,  
Unto the farmer striving to abate  
The pedler's price ; the village drawing near,

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

The smoke, that scenting the fresh eve, and clear,  
Tells of the feast ; the stithy's dying spark,  
The barn's wealth dimly showing through the dark.

How sweet was all ! how easy it should be  
Amid such life one's self-made woes to bear !  
He felt as one who, waked up suddenly  
To life's delight, knows not of grief or care.  
How kind, how lovesome, all the people were !  
Why should he think of aught but love and bliss  
With many years of such-like life as this ?

Night came at last, and darker and more still  
The world was, and the stars hung in the sky,  
And as the road o'ertopped a sunburnt hill  
He saw before him the great city lie,  
The glimmering lights about grey towers and high,  
Rising from gardens dark ; the guarded wall,  
The gleaming dykes, the great sea, bounding all.

As one who at the trumpet's sound casts by  
The tender thought of rest, of wife and child,  
And fear of death for hope of victory,  
So at that sight those sweet vague hopes and wild  
Did he cast by, and in the darkness smiled  
For pleasure of the beauty of the earth,  
For foretaste of the coming days of mirth.

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

SURELY if any man was blithe and glad  
Within that city, when the morrow's sun  
Beheld it, he at least the first place had,  
And midst of glad folk was the happiest one—  
So much to do, that was not e'en begun,  
So much to hope for, that he could not see,  
So much to win, so many things to be!

Yea, so much, he could turn himself to nought  
For many days, but wandered aimlessly  
Wherever men together might be brought,  
That he once more their daily life might see,  
That to his new-born life new seemed to be,  
And staving thought off, he awhile must shrink  
From touching that sweet cup he had to drink.

Yet when this mood was passed by, what was this,  
That in the draught he was about to drain,  
That new victorious life, all seemed amiss?  
If, thinking of the pleasure and the pain,  
Men find in struggling life, he turned to gain  
The godlike joy he hoped to find therein,  
All turned to cloud, and nought seemed left to win.

Love moved him not, yea, something in his heart  
There was that made him shudder at its name;

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

He could not rouse himself to take his part  
In ruling worlds and winning praise and blame ;  
And if vague hope of glory o'er him came,  
Why should he cast himself against the spears  
To make vain stories for the unpyting years ?

The thing that men call knowledge moved him not ;  
And if he thought of the world's varying face,  
And changing manners, then his heart waxed hot  
For thinking of his journey to that place,  
And how 'twixt him and it was little space,  
Then back to listlessness once more he turned,  
Quenching the flame that in his sick heart burned.

What thing was left him now, but only this,  
A life of aimless ease and luxury,  
That he must strive to think the promised bliss,  
Where hoping not for aught that was not nigh,  
Midst vain pretence he should but have to die,  
But every minute longing to confess  
That this was nought but utter weariness.

So to the foolish image of delight  
That rich men worship, now he needs must cling  
Despite himself, and pass by day and night  
As friendless and unloved as any king ;  
Till he began to doubt of everything  
Amidst that world of lies ; till he began  
To think of pain as very friend of man.

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

So passed the time, and though he felt the chain  
That round about his wasting life was cast,  
He still must think the labour all in vain  
To strive to free himself while life should last,  
And so, midst all, two weary years went past,  
Nought done, save death a little brought anear,  
The hard deliverance that he needs must fear.

At last one dawn, when all the place was still,  
He took that key, and e'en as one might gaze  
Upon the record of some little ill  
That happed in past days, now grown happy days,  
He eyed it, sighing, 'neath the young sun's rays;  
And silently he passed his palace through,  
Nor told himself what deed he had to do.

He reached the stable where his steeds were kept,  
And midst the delicate-limbed beasts he found  
The mule that o'er the forest grass had stepped,  
Then, having on her back the saddle bound,  
Entered the house again, and, looking round  
The darkened banquet-chamber, caught away  
What simple food the nighest to him lay.

Then, with the hand that rich men fawned upon,  
The wicket he unlocked, and forth he led  
His beast, and mounted when the street was won,  
Wherein already folk for daily bread  
Began to labour, who now turned the head  
To whisper as the rich man passed them by  
Betwixt the frails of fresh-plucked greenery.

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

He passed the wall where Firuz first he saw,  
The hostel where the dead man gave him food ;  
He passed the gate and 'gan at last to draw  
Unto the country bordering on the wood,  
And still he took no thought of bad or good,  
Or named his journey, nay, if he had met  
A face he knew, he might have turned back yet.

But all the folk he saw were strange to him,  
And, for all heed that unto them he gave,  
Might have been nought ; the reaper's bare brown limb,  
The rich man's train with litter and armed slave,  
The girl bare-footed in the stream's white wave—  
Like empty shadows by his eyes they passed,  
The world was narrowed to his heart at last.

He reached the hill, which e'en in that strange mood  
Seemed grown familiar to him, with no pain  
He found the path that pierced the tangled wood,  
And midst its dusk he gave his mule the rein,  
And in no long time reached the little plain,  
And then indeed the world seemed left behind,  
And no more now he felt confused and blind.

He cried aloud to see the whole house rise  
O'er the green garden and the long white wall,  
Which erst the pale moon showed unto his eyes,  
But on the stillness strange his voice did fall,  
For in the noon now woodland creatures all  
Were resting 'neath the shadow of the trees,  
Patient, unvexed by any memories.

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

How should he rest, who might have come too late?  
O'er the burnt plain he hurried, and laid hand  
Upon the rusted handle of the gate,  
Not touched since he himself thereby did stand.  
The warm and scented air his visage fanned,  
And on his head down rained the blossoms' dust,  
As back the heavy grass-choked door he thrust.

But ere upon the path grown green with weed  
He set his foot, he paused a little while,  
And of her gear his patient beast he freed,  
And muttered, as he smiled a doubtful smile,  
"Behold now if my troubles make me vile,  
And I once more have will to herd with man,  
Let me get back, then, even as I can."

There 'neath the tangled boughs he went apace,  
Remembering him awhile of that sad cry,  
That erst had been his welcome to that place,  
That showed him first it might be good to die,  
When he but thought of new delights anigh;  
Thereat he shuddered now, bethinking him  
In what a sea he cast himself to swim.

But his fate lay before him, on he went,  
And through the gilded doors, now open wide,  
He passed, and found the flowery hangings rent,  
And past his feet did hissing serpents glide,  
While from the hall wherein the mourners died  
A grey wolf glared, and o'er his head the bat  
Hung, and the paddock on the hearth-stone sat.



## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

He loitered not amid those loathsome things,  
That in the place which erst had been so fair  
Brought second death to fond imaginings  
Of that sweet life, he once had hoped for there ;  
So with a troubled heart and full of care,  
Though still with wild hopes stirring his hot blood,  
He turned his face unto the dreary wood.

No less the pleasance felt its evil day ;  
The trellis, that had shut the forest trees  
From the fair flowers, all torn and broken lay,  
Though still the lily's scent was on the breeze,  
And the rose clasped the broken images  
Of kings and priests, and those they once had loved,  
And in the scented bush the brown bird moved.

But with the choking weeds the tulip fought,  
Paler and smaller than he had been erst,  
The wind-flowers round the well, fair feet once sought,  
Were trodden down by feet of beasts athirst ;  
The well-trained apricot its bonds had burst ;  
The wild-cat in the cherry-tree anear  
Eyed the brown lynx that waited for the deer.

A little while upon the black wood's edge  
Did Bharam eye the ruin mournfully,  
Then turned and said, " I take it as a pledge  
That I shall not come back again to die ;  
The mocking image of felicity  
Awaited those poor souls that failed herein,  
But I most surely death or life shall win."

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Thus saying, through the wood he 'gan to go,  
And kindlier its black loneliness did seem  
Than all the fairness ruin brought so low ;  
So with good heart he reached the swift full stream,  
And there, as in an old unfinished dream,  
He stood amongst the mourners' graves and saw  
Past the small boat the eddies seaward draw.

Slowly, as one who thinks not of his deed,  
He gat into the boat, and loosed from shore,  
And 'gan to row the ready shallop freed  
Unto the landing cut beneath the door,  
And in a little minute stood before  
Its rusty leaves with beating heart, and hand  
His wavering troubled will could scarce command.

But almost ere he willed it, was the key  
Within the lock, and the great bolt sprang back,  
The iron door swung open heavily,  
And cold the wind rushed from a cavern black :  
Then with one look upon the woodland track,  
He stepped from out the fair light of the day,  
Casting all hope of common life away.

For at his back the heavy door swung to,  
Before him was thick darkness palpable ;  
And as he struggled further on to go,  
With dizzied head upon the ground he fell,  
And if he lived on yet, he scarce could tell,

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

Amid the phantoms new-born in that place  
That past his eyes 'gan flit in endless race.

Fair women changing into shapeless things,  
His own sad face mirrored, he knew not how,  
And heavy wingless birds, and beasts with wings,  
Strange stars, huge swirling seas, whose ebb and flow  
Now seemed too swift for thought, now dull and slow :  
Such things emmeshed his dying troubled thought,  
Until his soul to sightless sleep was brought.

But when he woke to languid consciousness  
Too well content he was therewith at first,  
To ope his eyes, or seek what things might bless  
His soul with rest from thought of good and worst,  
And still his faint incurious ease he nursed,  
Till nigh him rang a bird's note sweet and clear,  
And stirred in him the seeds of hope and fear.

Withal the murmur of a quiet sea  
He heard, and mingled sounds far off and sweet,  
And o'er his head some rustling summer tree ;  
Slowly thereon he gat unto his feet,  
And therewithal his sleep-dazed eyes did meet  
The westering golden splendour of the sun,  
For on that fair shore day was well-nigh done.

Then from the flashing sea and gleaming sky  
Unto the green earth did he turn him round,

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

And saw a fair land sloping lazily  
Up to a ridge of green with grey rocks crowned,  
And on those slopes did fruitful trees abound,  
And, cleaving them, came downward from the hill  
In many a tinkling fall a little rill.

Now with his waking senses, hunger too  
Must needs awake, parched did his dry throat feel,  
And hurrying, toward the little stream he drew,  
And by a clear and sandy pool did kneel  
And quenched his thirst, the while his hand did steal  
Unto his wallet, where he thought to find  
The bread he snatched from vain wealth left behind.

But when within his hand he held that bread,  
Mouldy and perished as with many days,  
He wondered much that he had not been dead,  
And fell to think with measureless amaze  
By what unheard-of, unimagined ways  
Unto that lonely land he had been brought;  
Until, bewildered in the maze of thought

That needs could lead nowhither, he arose  
And from the fairest of those fruit-hung trees  
The ripest and most luscious seeds he chose,  
And staved his hunger off awhile with these;  
Then 'twixt their trunks got back to where the breeze  
Blew cool from off the calm sea, thinking still  
That thence his fate must come for good or ill.

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

Thus, looking unto right and left, he passed  
Over the green-sward, till he reached the strand,  
And nought was 'twixt the sea and him at last,  
Except a lessening belt of yellow sand.  
There, looking seaward, he awhile did stand,  
Until at last the great sun's nether rim,  
Red with the sea-mist, in the sea 'gan swim.

But 'gainst it now a spot did he behold,  
Nor knew if he were dazzled with the light,  
Till as the orb sank and the sea grew cold,  
Greater that grew beneath the gathering night,  
And when all red was gone, and clear and bright  
The high moon was, beneath its light he saw  
A ship unto him o'er the waters draw.

Quickly his heart 'gan beat at sight of it,  
But what that he could do could change his fate?  
So calmly on the turf's edge did he sit  
The coming of that unknown keel to wait,  
That o'er the moonlit sea kept growing great,  
Until at last the dashing oars he heard,  
The creaking yard, the master's shouted word.

Then as the black hull 'neath the moonlight lay,  
In the long swell, bright against side and oar,  
A little shallop therefrom took its way  
Unto the low line of the breakers hoar,  
And when its keel was firm upon the shore

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Two women stepped out thence, and 'gan to go  
To Bharam's place with gentle steps and slow.

Then he arose, and wondering what should be  
The end hereof, stood gazing at them there,  
And even in that doubtful light could see  
That they were lovesome damsels young and fair;  
And as he watched their garlanded loose hair  
And dainty flutter of their rich array,  
Full many a hope about his heart 'gan play.

Now they drew nigh, and one of them began  
In a sweet voice these hopeful words to say,  
"Fear not, but come with us, O happy man,  
Nor with thy doubts or questions make delay;  
For this soft night gets ready such a day,  
As shall thy heart for feeble pining blame,  
And call thy hot desire a languid shame."

Therewith she turned again unto the sea,  
As though she doubted not what he would do,  
And Bharam followed after silently,  
And went aboard the shallop with the two,  
As one who dreams; and as the prow cleft through  
The grey waves, sat beside them, pondering o'er  
The days grown dim that led to that strange shore.

None spake to him, the mariners toiled on,  
Silent the damsels sat, hand joined to hand,

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

Until the black sides of the ship were won ;  
Then folk hauled up the boat, his feet did stand  
On the wide deck, the master gave command,  
Back went the oars, and o'er the waters wan,  
Unto the west 'neath sail and oar she ran.

All night they sailed, and when the dawn was nigh  
And far astern the eastern sky grew bright,  
A dark line seemed to cross the western sky  
Afar and faint, and with the growing light  
Another land began to heave in sight,  
And when the lingering twilight was all done,  
Grey cliffs they saw, made ruddy with the sun.

But when the shadow of their well-shaved mast  
Had shortened that it no more touched the sea,  
And well-nigh all the windy waste was past  
That kept them from the land where they would be,  
They turned about a ness, and 'neath their lee  
A sandy-beached and green-banked haven lay,  
For there a river cleft the mountains grey.

Thither they steered with no delay, and then  
Upon the green slopes Bharam could behold  
The white tents and the spears of many men,  
And on the o'erhanging height a castle old,  
And up the bay a ship o'erlaid with gold,  
With golden sails and fluttering banners bright,  
And silken awnings 'gainst the hot sun dight.

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

But underneath the tents, anigh that ship,  
A space there was amidst of shadowing trees,  
Well clad with turf down to the haven's lip ;  
And there, amongst the pasture of the bees,  
Fanned by the long-drawn sweet-breathed ocean-breeze,  
Well canopied, was set a wondrous throne,  
Amidst whose cushions sat a maid alone.

Crowned as a queen was she, and round her seat  
Were damsels gathered, clad just in such guise  
As those who on the sands did Bharam meet,  
And stood beside him now, with lovesome eyes.  
All this saw Bharam in no other wise  
Than one might see a dream becoming true,  
Nor had he thought of what he next should do.

Only those longings, vague and aimless erst,  
Now quickened tenfold, found a cause and aim,  
And on his soul a flood of light outburst,  
That swallowed up in brightness of its flame  
Strange thoughts of death, and hopes without a name,  
For now he knew that love had led him on,  
Until—until, perchance, the end was won.

Unto that presence straight the shipmen steered,  
And as the white foam from the oars did fly,  
And the black prow the daisied green-sward neared,  
Uprose a song from that fair company,  
Which those two damsels echoed murmuringly,  
Bearing love-laden words unto his ears  
On tender music, mother of sweet tears.



## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

### SONG

*O thou who drawest nigh across the sea,  
O heart that seekest Love perpetually,  
Nor know'st his name, come now at last to me !*

*Come, thirst of love thy lips too long have borne,  
Hunger of love thy heart hath long outworn,  
Speech hadst thou but to call thyself forlorn.*

*The seeker finds now, the parched lips are led  
To sweet full streams, the hungry heart is fed,  
And song springs up from moans of sorrow dead.*

*Draw nigh, draw nigh, and tell me all thy tale ;  
In words grown sweet since all the woe doth fail,  
Show me wherewith thou didst thy woe bewail.*

*Draw nigh, draw nigh, beloved ! think of these  
That stand around as well-wrought images,  
Earless and eyeless as these trembling trees.*

*I think the sky calls living none but three :  
The God that looketh thence and thee and me ;  
And He made us, but we made Love to be.*

*Think not of time, then, for thou shalt not die  
How soon soever shall the world go by,  
And nought be left but God and thou and I.*

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

*And yet, O love, why makest thou delay?  
Life comes not till thou comest, and the day  
That knows no end may yet be cast away.*

Such words the summer air swept past his ears,  
Such words the lovesome maidens murmured,  
With unabashed soft eyes made wet with tears,  
As though for them the world were really dead,  
As though indeed those tender words they said  
Each to her love, and each her fingers moved,  
As though she thought to meet the hands she loved.

But Bharam heeded not their lovesomeness,  
As through his heart there shot one bitter thought  
Of those dead mourners and their dead distress  
That his own feet to such a land had brought,  
But even ere the fear had come to nought,  
The thought that made it, yea, all memory  
Of what had been, had utterly passed by.

But when the song was done, and on the strand  
The bark's prow grated, and the maidens twain  
In low words bade him follow them aland,  
Still, mid the certain hope of boundless gain,  
About him clung the seeming-causeless pain  
Of that past thought, that love had driven away,  
The dreary teaching of a hopeless day.

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

And as unto the throne he drew anigh  
He tried to say unto himself, "Alas!  
Why am I full of such felicity?  
How know I that for me the music was?  
How know I yet what thing will come to pass?  
How know I that my heart can bear the best,  
Vain foolish heart that knew but little rest?"

A moment more and toward that golden ship  
His face was turned, a hand was holding his;  
His eyes with happy tears were wet, his lip  
Still thrilled with memory of a loving kiss,  
His eager ears drank in melodious bliss  
Past words to tell of; joy was born at last,  
Surely the bitterness of death was past.

How can I give her image unto you,  
Clad in that raiment wonderful and fair?  
What need? Be sure that love's eye pierceth through  
What web soever hides the beauty there—  
To tell her fairness? Measure forth the air,  
And weigh the wind, and portion out the sun!  
This still is left, less easy to be done.

Into the golden ship now passed the twain,  
The maidens followed, and the soldiers moved  
Their ordered ranks, the shoreward road to gain;  
The minstrels played what tunes the best behaved,  
While in the stern the lover and beloved

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Had nought to do but each on each to gaze,  
Without a thought of past or coming days.

Up stream the gold prow pointed, the long oars  
Broke into curves of white the swirling green,  
On each side opened out the changing shores;  
So lovely there were all things to be seen,  
That in the golden age they might have been;  
But rather had he gaze upon those eyes  
Than see the whole world freed from miseries.

Sometimes she said, "And this, O love, is thine,  
As thou art mine. Look forth thy land to see!"  
But he looked not, but rather would entwine  
His fingers in her fingers amorously,  
And answer, "Yea, and that one day shall be  
When thou shalt go upon the blossoms sweet,  
And I must look thereon to see thy feet!"

Now the stream narrowed, and the country girls  
Thronged on the banks to see the Queen go by,  
And cast fresh flowers upon the weedy swirls.  
"Look forth! they sing to our felicity!"  
The Queen said, "And the city draweth nigh."  
"Nay, nay," said Bharam, "I will look on them  
When they shall kneel to kiss thy garment's hem."

Now far ahead, above dark banks of trees  
Could they behold the city's high white wall,

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

And, as they neared it, on the summer breeze  
Was borne the tumult of the festival ;  
And when that sound on Bharam's ears did fall,  
He cried, " Ah, will they lengthen out the day,  
E'en when kind night has drawn the sun away ? "

She sighed and said, " Nay now, be glad, O king,  
That thou art coming to thy very own ;  
Nor one day shalt thou think it a small thing  
That thou therein mayst wear the royal crown  
When somewhat weary thou at last art grown,  
Through lapse of days, of this and this and this—  
That something more is left thee than a kiss. "

He stared at her wide eyes as one who heard  
Yet knew not what the words might signify,  
Then said, " And think'st thou I shall be afeard  
To slay myself before our love goes by,  
That changed by death, if we indeed can die,  
Unwearied by this anxious, earthy frame,  
I still may think of thee, and know no shame ? "

She gazed upon his flushed face tenderly,  
Reddening herself for love, but said not aught,  
Only her bosom heaved with one soft sigh,  
And some unravelled maze of troublous thought  
Unbidden tears unto her sweet eyes brought ;  
And he forgot that shade of bitterness  
When such a look his yearning heart did bless.

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Thereat the silver trumpet's tuneful blare  
Made music strange unto his lovesome dream,  
For now before them lay the city fair,  
With high white bridges spanning the swift stream,  
And bridge and shore with wealth of gold did gleam.  
From a great multitude shout followed shout,  
And high in air the sound of bells leapt out.

And then the shipmen furled the golden sail—  
Slowly the red oars o'er the stream did skim,  
As 'twixt the houses the light wind 'gan fail,  
Till by a palace on the river's brim,  
Whose towering height made half the bells grow dim,  
The golden ship was stayed, for they had come  
Unto the happy seeker's wondrous home.

"Look up and wonder, well-beloved," she said,  
As now they rose to go unto the shore,  
"At what the men did for us who are dead,  
And praise them for the depth of their past lore,  
And thank them though their life is long past o'er.  
If they had known that all these things should be,  
How better had they wrought for thee and me?"

Gravely she looked into his eager eyes,  
That turned unto the house a little while,  
But took small heed of all the phantasies  
Wherewith those men their trouble did beguile,  
Though calmly did the vast front seem to smile,

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

From all its breadth of beauty looking down  
Upon the tumult of the joyous town.

Again she sighed, but passed on silently,  
And o'er the golden gangway went the twain  
Unto the gold shade of the doorway high,  
Treading on golden cloths, betwixt a lane  
Of girls who each had been a kingdom's bane  
In toiling, troubled lands, where loveliness  
In scanty measure longing men doth bless.

One moment, and the threshold Bharam passed,  
And that desire his heart was set upon  
Yet would not name, his heart hath won at last.  
Ah, if the end of all thereby were won !  
For though, indeed, the noontide sun hath shone,  
And all the clouds are scattered, who can say  
What clouds shall curse the latter end of day ?

THE days passed—growing sweeter as the year  
Declined through autumn into winter-tide ;  
Perchance, for though no day could be so dear  
As that whereon he first had seen his bride,  
Yet still no less did love with him abide,  
Tempered with quiet days and restfulness ;  
Desire fulfilled, renewed, his life did bless.

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

And thereto now were added other joys,  
Her gifts indeed, unmeet for him to scorn :  
The judgment-seat, the tourney's glorious noise,  
The council wherein were the wise laws born ;  
Sweet tales of lovers vanquished and forlorn,  
To make bliss greater when these lovers met,  
Silent, alone, all troubles to forget—

All troubles to forget—the winter went,  
Spring came, and love seemed worthier therewith  
    weighed,  
The summer came, and brought no discontent,  
Nor yet with autumn's fading did love fade,  
And the cold winter love the warmer made.  
—So Bharam said, when round his love he clung,  
And lonely, still such words were on his tongue.

At last from this and that (it boots not now  
To tell the why and wherefore of the thing),  
Great war and strife with other lands did grow,  
And weeping she around his neck must cling,  
Bidding him look for such a welcoming  
When he came back again, as should outdo  
The day that made one heart and life of two.

Nor did this fail: tried at all points was he,  
He met the foe, and, beaten back with shame,  
Snatched from victorious hands the victory,  
And, winner of a great and godlike name,  
Sighing with love, back to his love he came,  
Worthy of love and changed by love indeed,  
And with most glorious love to be his meed.



## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

—Ah, changed by love—the fickle careless earth,  
The deeds of men, the troubles that they had,  
That in first love he held of little worth,  
Now like a well-told tale would make him glad,  
And nought therein to him seemed lost or bad;  
“And love,” he said, “my joyous life doth bound,  
E’en as the sea some fair isle flows around.”

—“Love flows around”—alas, as time went on  
Some strong career of striving would he stay,  
And falter e’en at point of victory won,  
And well-nigh cast the longed-for thing away:  
“Nay, let me think of love,” then would he say.  
“Ah, I have swerved from singleness of heart,  
Let me return, nor in these things have part.”

“Let me return”—but, ah, what thing was this?  
That in his love’s arms he would feel the sting  
Of vain desire, and ne’er-accomplished bliss.  
—At whiles, indeed—for he had strength to fling  
All thought away, and to his love to cling.  
—At least as yet, and still he seemed to be  
Dowered with the depth of all felicity.

So passed the time, till he two years had been  
Living that joyous life in that fair land,  
When on a day there came to him the Queen,  
And said: “Fair love, all folk bow ’neath the hand  
Of this or that, and I, at the command  
Of one whose will I dare not disobey,  
Must leave thee lonely till the hundredth day.

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

“Nay, now, forbear to ask me why I go!  
Thou know'st all things are thine that I have got,  
Nathless this one thing never shalt thou know,  
Unless the love grow cold that once was hot,  
And thou art grown weary of thy lot.  
Ah, love, forgive me! for thy kiss is sweet,  
As cool fresh streams to bruised and weary feet.

“Yet one more word; the room where thou and I  
Were left alone that day of all sweet days;  
Enter it not, till that time is passed by  
I told thee of, and many weary ways  
My feet have worn, to meet thy loving gaze;  
For surely as thy foot therein shall tread,  
Thou unto me, as I to thee, art dead.

“And yet, for fear of base and prying folk,  
Needs must thou bear about that chamber's key.  
Ah, love, farewell! no hard or troublous yoke  
Thou hast to bear, nor have I doubt of thee.  
For all the stream of tears that thou dost see,  
They are love's offspring only, for my heart  
Yet more than heretofore in thine has part.”

Thus did she go, and he so left behind,  
Mourned for her and desired her very sore,  
Yet, with a pang, he felt that he was blind,  
Despite of words, that yet there was a store  
Of some undreamed-of and victorious lore  
He might not touch—frowning he turned away,  
And seemed a troubled, gloomy man that day.

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

Yet loyally for many days he dwelt  
Within that house, or from his golden throne  
Good justice to the thronging people dealt ;  
But when night came, and he was left alone,  
Then all that splendour scarcely seemed his own ;  
And when he fell to thinking of his love,  
He 'gan to wish that he his heart might prove.

In agony he strove to cast from him  
Fresh doubts of what she was, and all his tale  
Rose up once more, now vague indeed and dim,  
Yet worse therefore perchance—if he should fail,  
And in some half-remembered hell go wail  
His happy lot, the days that might have been !  
Was she his bane ?—his life, his love, his queen.

Then would he image forth her body fair,  
And limb by limb would set before his eyes  
Her loveliness as he had seen it there ;  
Then cry, “ Why think of these vain mysteries  
When still ahead such happy life there lies ?  
And yet and yet, this that doth so outshine  
All other beauty, is it wholly mine ?

“ How can it change, that throne of loveliness ?  
How can it change—but I grow old and die.  
Perchance some other heart those eyes shall bless,  
Some other head upon that bosom lie,  
When all that once I was is long gone by :  
And now what memory through my mind has passed  
Of men from some strange heaven of love outcast ?

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

“Who knows but in that chamber I may find  
The clue unto this tangled, weary maze,  
And vision clear, whereas I now am blind,  
And endless love instead of anxious days—  
A glorious end to all these dark strange ways?  
Perchance those words she did but say to me,  
To try my heart—did she not give the key?”

So passed the days, and sometimes would he strive  
To think of nothing but her dear return,  
And midst of kingly deeds would think to live,  
But then again full oft his heart would burn  
The uttermost of all the thing to learn;  
Love failed him not, but baneful jealousy  
Had scaled his golden throne and sat thereby.

Now he began to wander nigh the door,  
And draw from out its place the golden key,  
And curse the gift, and wish the days passed o'er,  
Till in his arms his love once more should be;  
Yet still he dreaded what his eyes should see  
In those familiar and beloved eyes,  
Changed now perchance in some unlooked-for wise.

At last a day came, on the morn of it  
Did he arise from haggard dreamful sleep,  
And on the throne of justice did he sit,  
In troublous outward things his soul to steep;  
Then, armed, upon his war-horse did he leap,  
And in the lists right eagerly did play,  
As one who every care hath cast away.

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

Then came the evening banquet, and he sat  
To watch the dancers' gold-adorned feet,  
And with his great men talked of this and that,  
Then rose, with gold a minstrel-man to greet,  
Then listened to his pensive song and sweet  
With serious eyes, and still in everything  
He seemed an unrebuked and glorious king.

But at the dead of night was he alone  
Once more, once more within his wavering heart  
Strange thought against confused thought was thrown,  
Nor knew he how real life from dreams to part,  
All seemed to him a picture made by art,  
Except the overwhelming strong desire  
To know the end, that set his heart afire.

Dawn found him thus ; then he arose from bed,  
He kissed her picture hanging on the wall,  
The linen things that veiled her goodlihead  
From all but him, and still, like bitterest gall,  
A thought rose up within him therewithal,  
And strangely was his heart confused with fears  
That checked the rise of tender, loving tears.

He gat the golden key into his hand,  
And once more had a glimmering memory  
Of how just so he once before did stand,  
Ready another golden key to try ;  
Then murmured he, " Gat I not bliss thereby ?  
Unless all this is such a gleam of thought,  
That to a man's mind sometimes will be brought,

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

“Of how he lived before, he knows not where.”  
So saying, from the chamber did he pass,  
And went a long way down a cloister fair,  
And o’er a little pleasance of green grass,  
Until anigh the very door he was  
That hid that mystery from him; there he stayed,  
And in his hand the golden key he weighed.

There stood he, trying hard to think thereof,  
The better and the worse, how all would be  
If he should do the deed, but thought would move  
From this thing unto that confusedly,  
And neither past nor future could he see,  
Nay scarce could say of what thing then he thought,  
Such fever now the fierce desire had wrought.

Not long he lingered, in the lock he set  
The golden key, as one constrained thereto,  
And thrust the door back, and with scared eyes met  
The lovely chamber that so well he knew,  
And therein still was all in order due,  
No deathlike image seared his wondering eyes,  
No strange sound smote his ears with ill surprise.

He sighed, and smiled, as one would say, “Ah, why  
Have I feared this, wherein was nought to fear,  
Wrapping familiar things in mystery?”  
And even therewithal did he draw near  
To well-remembered things his soul held dear,  
Gazing at all those matters one by one,  
That told of sweet things there in past days done.

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

There in the grey light were the hangings fair,  
No figure in them changed now any whit,  
The marble floor half hid with carpets rare  
E'en as when first he saw her feet on it,  
A grey moth's whirring wings indeed did flit  
Across the fair bed's gleaming canopy,  
But yet no other change had passed thereby.

And by the bed upon the floor there lay  
Soft raiment of his love, as though that she  
Had there unclad her, ere she went away.  
He stopped and touched the fair things tenderly,  
And love swept over him as some grey sea  
Sweeps o'er the dry shells of a sandy bank,  
And with dry lips his own salt tears he drank.

He rose within a while, and turned about  
Unto the door, and said, "Three days it is  
Before she comes to take away all doubt;  
And wrap my soul again in utter bliss;  
I will depart, that she may smile at this,  
Giving the pity and forgiveness due  
Unto a heart whose feebleness she knew."

Therewith he turned to go, but even then,  
Upon a little table nigh his hand,  
Beheld a cup the work of cunning men  
For many a long year vanished from the land;  
And up against it did a tablet stand,  
Whereon were gleaming letters writ in gold;  
Then breathlessly these things did he behold;

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

For never had his eyes beheld them erst,  
And well he deemed the secret lay therein ;  
Trembling, he said, " This cup may quench my thirst ;  
Fair rest from this strange tablet may I win,  
And if I sin she will forgive my sin ;  
Nay, rather since her word I disobey  
In entering here, no heavier this will weigh."

Withal he took the tablet, and he read ;  
*" O thou who, venturing much, hast gained so much,  
Drink of this cup, and be remembered  
When all are gone whose feet the green earth touch :  
Dull is the labouring world, nor holdeth such  
As think and yet are happy ; then be bold,  
And things unthought of shall thine eyes behold !*

*" Yea, thou must drink, for if thou drinkest not  
Nor soundest all the depths of this hid thing,  
Think'st thou that these my words can be forgot,  
How close soever thou to love mayst cling,  
How much soever thou art still a king ?  
Drink then, and take what thou hast fairly won,  
For make no doubt that thine old life is done."*

He took the cup and round about the bowl  
Beheld strange figures carved, strange letters writ,  
But mid the hurrying tumult of his soul,  
He of their meaning then could make no whit,  
Though afterwards their smallest lines would flit  
Before his eyes, in times that came to him  
When many a greater matter had grown dim.



## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

So with closed eyes he drank, and once again,  
While on his quivering lip the sweet draught hung,  
Did he think dimly of those mourning men  
And saw them winding the dark trees among,  
And in his ears their doleful wailing rung ;  
His love and all the glories of his home  
E'en in that minute shadows had become.

E'en in that minute, though at first indeed  
In one quick flash of pain unbearable,  
His love, his queen, made bare of any weed,  
Seemed standing there, as though some tale to tell  
From opened lips ; and then a dark veil fell  
O'er all things there, a chill and restless breeze  
Seemed moaning through innumerable trees.

Yet still he staggered onwards to the door  
With arms outspread, as one who in dark night  
Wanders through places he has known before ;  
Wide open were his eyes that had no sight,  
And with a feverish flush his cheeks were bright,  
His lips moved, some unspoken words to say,  
As, sinking down, across the door he lay.

**W**HAT strange confused dreams swept through his  
sleep !  
What fights he fought, nor knew with whom or why ;  
How piteously for nothing he must weep,

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

For what inane rewards he still must try  
To pierce the inner earth or scale the sky !  
What faces long forgot rose up to him !  
On what a sea of unrest did he swim !

He woke, the wind blew cold upon his face,  
The sound of swirling waters smote his ear,  
Through the deep quiet of some lonely place ;  
Shuddering with horror at what might be near,  
He closed his dazzled eyes again for fear,  
Ere they had seen aught but the light of day  
And formless things against it, black and grey.

Trembling awhile he lay, and scarcely knew  
Why he was sick with fear, but when at last  
His wretched soul unto his body drew,  
And somewhat he could think about the past,  
As one might wake to hell, around he cast  
A haggard glance, and saw before him there  
A grey cliff rising high into the air

Across a deep swift river, and the door  
Shut fast against him, did he see therein,  
Wherethrough with trembling steps he passed before  
That happy life above all lives to win,  
And round about him the sharp grass and thin,  
Covered low mounds that here and there arose,  
For to his head his forerunners were close.

Then with changed voice he moaned and to his feet  
Slowly he gat, and 'twixt the tree-boles grey

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

He 'gan to go, and tender words and sweet  
Were in his ears, the promise of a day  
When he should cast all troublous thoughts away.  
He stopped, and turned his face unto the trees  
To hearken to the moaning of the breeze ;

Because it seemed well-nigh articulate ;  
He cried aloud, "Come back, come back to me !"  
If yet the echo of the fearful gate  
Had any sound to help his misery ;  
He shut his eyes, lest he perchance might be  
Caught by some fearful dream within a dream,  
That he might wake up to his gold bed's gleam.

Voiceless the wind was, the grey cliff was dumb,  
His eyes could show him nought but that same place  
Whereto in days of hope his feet had come ;  
He cast himself adown, and hid his face  
Within the grass, and heeding no disgrace,  
Howled beastlike, till his voice grew hoarse and dim,  
And little life indeed seemed left in him.

Then in a while he rose and tottered on  
Adown that path, 'scarce knowing what had been  
Or why his woe was such, until he won  
To where had been of old the pleasance green,  
Whose beauty, whose decay he erst had seen  
That now indeed a tangled waste had grown,  
Whose first estate scarce any man had known.

Roofless above it then he saw the house,  
Whose vanished loveliness his heart had filled

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

With fresh luxurious longings amorous,  
And thitherward, though thus he scarcely willed,  
His feet must stray to see the wild bird build  
Her nest within the chambers, once made bright,  
To house the delicate givers of delight.

And now the first rage of his grief being o'er,  
Madness was past, though pain was greater still,  
And he remembered well the days of yore,  
And how his great desire made all things ill,  
And aye with restlessness his life did fill;  
Too hard to bear that he must cast away  
Honour and wealth, to reach e'en such a day.

Now in the hall upon that bench of stone,  
Where erst the mourners used to sit, he sat,  
Striving to think of all that he had done  
Before his heart's unnamed desire he gat,  
Striving to hope that still in this or that  
He might take pleasure yet before he died,  
That the hard days a little joy might hide.

He moaned to think that he had cast away  
All hope of quiet life then when his hand  
Was on the key 'neath that high cliff and grey,  
And looking backward he awhile did stand—  
Needs must he deem him worse than that sad  
band  
Who therein erst their wretched lives outwore,  
However great the burden that they bore.

## HE WHO NEVER LAUGHED AGAIN

For they, he said, had somewhat left of rest,  
Since in that place indeed they could abide,  
But on his heart the weight of woe so pressed  
That he his wretched head could never hide,  
But needs must wander forth until he died—  
Ah God, more full of horror seemed that place,  
Than the world's curious eyes upon his face.

For there he seemed to sleep that he might dream  
The worst of dreams,—he seemed to be awake,  
That through them all might pierce no hopeful gleam,  
That he the fearful chain might never break ;  
And shameful images his eyes must make  
That shuddering he must call by his love's name,  
And on his lips must gather words of shame.

Midst this, I say, what will was left to him,  
Still urged him unto men's abodes again,  
So that he rose, and though his eyes were dim  
With misery, he crossed the sunburnt plain,  
And as one walks in sleep, with little pain  
He pierced the forest through, and came once more  
Unto the hill that looked the uplands o'er.

Fierce was the summer sun of that bright day,  
When on the upland road he set his feet,  
And man and beast within the shadow lay  
And rested, but no rest to him was sweet  
That he could gain, and when the hot sun beat  
Upon his head as from the wood he passed,  
Nought noted he that flame upon him cast.

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

At end of day he reached the city gate,  
And now no more he moaned, his eyes were dry ;  
Shut in his body's bonds, his soul would wait  
The utmost term of all its misery,  
Nor hope for any ease, nor pray to die.  
Some poor abode within that city fair  
He gat himself, and passed the long days there.

But now and then men saw him on the quays,  
Gazing on busy scenes he heeded nought,  
Or passing through the crowd on festal days,  
Or in some net of merry children caught,  
And when they saw his dreamy eyes distraught,  
His changeless face drawn with that hidden pain,  
They said, "THE MAN WHO NE'ER SHALL LAUGH  
AGAIN."

## OCTOBER

AH, these, with life so done with now, might deem  
That better is it resting in a dream,  
Yea, e'en a dull dream, than with outstretched hand,  
And wild eyes, face to face with life to stand,  
No more the master now of anything,  
Through striving of all things to be the king—  
Than waking in a hard taskmaster's grasp  
Because we strove the unsullied joy to clasp—  
Than just to find our hearts the world, as we  
Still thought we were and ever longed to be,  
To find nought real except ourselves, and find  
All care for all things scattered to the wind,  
Scarce in our hearts the very pain alive.  
Compelled to breathe indeed, compelled to strive,  
Compelled to fear, yet not allowed to hope—  
For e'en as men laid on a flowery slope  
'Twixt inaccessible cliffs and unsailed sea,  
Painless, and waiting for eternity  
That will not harm, were these old men now grown.  
The seed of unrest, that their hearts had sown,  
Sprung up, and garnered, and consumed, had left  
Nought that from out their treasure might be reft;  
All was a picture in these latter days,  
That had been once, and they might sit and praise  
The calm, wise heart that knoweth how to rest,  
The man too kind to snatch out at the best,

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Since he is part of all, each thing a part,  
Beloved alike of his wide-loving heart.

Ah, how the night-wind raved, and wind and sea  
Clashed wildly in their useless agony,  
But dulled not or made weak the minstrel's song  
That through the hall bemocked the lost year's wrong.